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ALICE LEIGHTON

A TALE OF  
THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY







ALICE LEIGHTON.

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# ALICE LEIGHTON.

A

Tale of the Seventeenth Century.

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'Fais ce que dois advienne que pourra.'



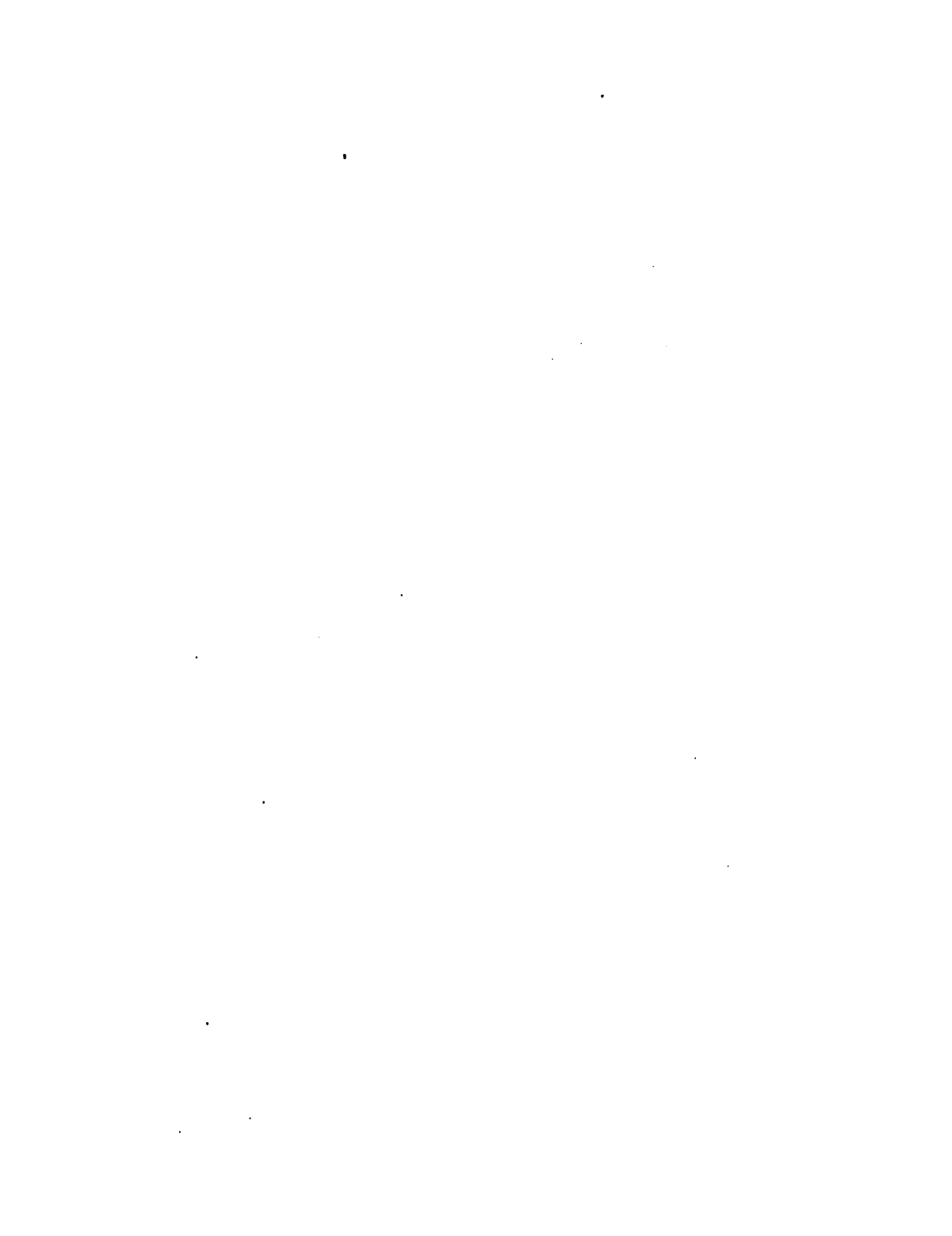
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# ALICE LEIGHTON:

*A Tale of the Seventeenth Century.*

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## CHAPTER I.

‘Coming events cast their shadows before.’

It was a bright morning in June 1645: The pretty village of Fairleigh and the dark gray walls of Edgeleigh Manor in its vicinity were bathed in a rich golden glow of sunlight. A slight breeze, setting in from the west, diffused a pleasant freshness, and a few drops of rain had sated the thirsty flowers, and quickened them to new beauty and fragrance. Grandly, but perchance a little gloomily, the ivy-clad turrets reared themselves aloft over the low laurel and laurestinus bushes. The dark stone walls, grown gray with time, but tipped with gold where the sunlight touched them, and the narrow mullioned windows, richly cusped, with their many-tinted quorals, were in keeping with the formal but gorgeous flower-beds in the garden below. One of the windows was open to admit the morning air, and leaning against the wall beneath stood a boy of eighteen.

He was dressed in the rich cavalier attire which belonged to the middle of the seventeenth century, and which well became the slight graceful figure and the almost feminine beauty of his face. His brow was, however, clouded, either with emotion or with sorrow, perchance with both; and a careful observer might have marked a tear in his soft dark eyes as he turned his gaze upon the fair view before him. It was indeed a lovely landscape upon which he gazed: a broad richly-cultivated plain,

with a fine broken outline of hills forming its background ; a varied glow of soft bright colouring ; sky above, and beautiful summer earth beneath ; soft white clouds sailing across the blue arch of heaven, casting long shadows upon the greensward ; gay insects hovering over the grass ; graceful garlands hung out from the wild-rose and eglantine ; sweet music trilling up into the air from the thrushes that fluttered in and out among the branches of the trees. It was very fair, and he was young and fitted to enjoy it to its utmost ; and yet his heart was sad, sadder for the very beauty that surrounded him.

‘To-day,’ he murmured, and his tone was very sorrowful, ‘eighteen summers have at last passed over me, and happy indeed has been their course. Few sorrows have been mine, and Heaven has blessed me with the love of all around. And of all happy days, the brightest and the gladdest has ever been my birthday. My own dear home. It were strange indeed did I not love thee, for thou art the scene of all my childhood’s pleasures, and dearer yet with the memory of my long-departed mother. How often in fancy shall I turn to gaze again upon thy calm horizon, on thy silver Severn, and on thy steep-ascending beautiful hills ! How often in camp, and on battlefield, shall I listen for the soft murmuring of thy breezes, and the yet softer accents of my mother’s voice ! Sweet mother : she would bless me now, and her fond heart would mourn over the sorrows of her son. And in truth ’tis a bitter trial which awaits me, and this very hour may make me *fatherless*. Duty calls me ; I must listen to her voice. Conscience speaks ; I must obey. The accents of a dethroned monarch are calling for assistance ; and, boy as I am, my arm shall be raised, and my heart shall answer him. And yet another voice is rising in my mind. The ties of love restrain me. The long-listened-to maxims of my childhood hold me back. The fierce whisperings of Puritanic zeal and the certainty of a father’s anger fall heavy on my heart. But no ; they shall not sway me. Too often have I listened to the maxims of the “godly.” Duty calls and honour prompts me ; the spirit of my mother spurs me on. Kind Heaven, assist me ! I have stood before the altar of the

Most High. I have vowed to be faithful to God and to King Charles. Bitter may be the trial, but the hour for its fulfilment is approaching. Fierce indeed may be the struggle, but end it *must* in victory. Eighteen years have fled, and my destiny is to-day decided.'

'And is it indeed to-day?' said a voice beside him, so deep, so thrilling in its tenderness and pathos, that he turned round and looked earnestly at the speaker. But she moved not her large gipsy eyes from his face. She heard not when he spoke; she marked not the shade of sadness on his brow, nor the rich and quaintly-coloured vesture so strange and so unsuited in that formal Puritanic homestead; so deep, so fixed, yet withal so vacant was her glance, that she seemed like a sibyl gazing into futurity.

She was of the middle size, slight and wiry, with a face wrinkled and sunburnt, and was apparently of a great age. Her eyes were large, wild, and lustrous; her hair white as snow. The scarlet handkerchief with which her head was covered was of the kind much used amongst the gipsies even of our own times. One withered hand was resting on her staff; the other was pressed upon her brow, as though to aid her in her anxious scrutiny. And now a smile, faint and wintry and uncertain, lit up her dark features; and now a sigh heaved her breast; and sadness shadowed over her brow. Ernest—for such was the boy's name—had gazed long and earnestly upon her. A kind of spell seemed to hold him enchained; a feeling of awe was mingled with the curiosity natural to his age; and it was not until the smile dawned slowly but surely upon her countenance that he broke the silence, and said:

'I have surely met you before, good woman; and you also seem to know me. Wherefore indeed I know not, but the morning light lends to your features so strange an interest that it brings back old times and scenes to my remembrance, and I would fain have stayed to question you. But now—'

'Hush, boy!' she cried, and her tone was stern and hasty. Then very sorrowful: 'Ye ha'e broken the thread o' futurity, an' ha'e marred the mirror o' your life tae come. Stay!' she con-

tinued, seeing him about to speak ; and, seizing him by the arm, she turned him towards the light. 'Na, na ; past an' gane, past an' gane. I thought it waur a vision, an' it waur th' light in yer ain een. A' faded, boy. Why did ye speak to me ?' And she dropped his hand, and sighed heavily.

Ernest was both startled and perplexed by the mysterious words and manner of the stranger, but his curiosity was aroused also as to who she was and why she came there. Even had it not been so he would have stayed to question her, for he saw that she felt an interest in him.

'I am sorry if my speech disturbed you,' he said gently, and with his frank winning smile. 'But your words are strange to me, for how I have marred or made my fortune it passeth me to know. I am a scant believer in presentiments or prophecies.'

'But thou *shalt* believe them,' she cried, as she gazed half angrily into his boyish face. 'Boy, boy, was thy mither a Cameron, an' dost thou laugh tae scorn the seers o' her contrie !'

'Not so, indeed,' he replied somewhat mournfully. 'All that regards my mother is sacred to me ; but who are you, strange woman, who speak to me of one long departed, and threaten to force upon my credence what my heart and my will alike refuse to believe ?'

'Ernest Heyward,' she answered, 'I know ye, and I knew also yer mither. I foresaw her fortunes an' her death ; an' e'en when ye spake to me a long absent gift waur restored tae me, an' I saw in a vision, misty an' uncertain, the fortunes of *her* son.'

'And what *saw* you ?' asked Ernest, despite his incredulity, anxious to learn the nature of the trance that he had remarked ; perhaps too in his inmost heart he felt that yearning to glance into the future that comes to most of us at times, and oftenest when we stand, as he was standing, on the very brink of a great and desperate change.

'I saw bitter trials and a dark cloud overshadow thee, Ernest Heyward,' said the old woman sadly. 'I saw thee in camp an' on the battle-field, an' I saw thee in prison an' a cap-



tive. I saw thee sustain the honour of thy cause, an' I saw its dearest hopes fa' down an' perish. I saw thee at midnight by the bridal altar, an' I saw thee at day-dawn on the scaffold. Ah ! she almost shrieked, as again she caught his hand, and again her wild orbs gazed fixedly into the distance,—‘ah, might that vision shine forth ance mair ! But na. Vain hope, I will na heed thee. Wha is that messenger wha rides sae fast ? Na, na ; it is a' gane again, a' gane, a' dark. Ernest Heyward, it is past.’

She stood upright before him, and glanced on the fair handsome features, beautiful in their youthful brightness.

‘Thou art gude and thou art fair,’ she murmured, ‘an’ thy cause is gude, and thy heart is leal. Gae on thy way bravely, boy ; gae on bravely ; an’ hast thou a dark weird to struggle wi’, fear not. Sad it may be, an’ dark an’ stormy it maun be, and blude will flow and hearts will break ; it may hae a bright end after a’. My dream, my dream ! But thou hast spoken, and thou maun bide thy time. Heaven bless thee, young soldier, for the true cause thou upholdest, and for the true faith thou bearest !’

She turned away abruptly ; but after proceeding a few yards, she turned towards him again and murmured :

‘What waur the light that waur breaking through the cloud ? It waur a glimmering o’ hope. I feel it, an’ I know it. Dark may be his life, many sorrows may surround him, but he may yet see the triumph o’ his cause ; and his destiny once accomplished, happiness may be his lot. Thou *shalt* believe it, Ernest Heyward. Presentiments o’ thy fate shall weigh heavy on thy heart ; yet na for evil, but for gude ! *Evil !* I wish thee nae evil ; but sorrow shall uphold thee on the path of glory, and suffering shall make thee truly great. Farewell ; God bless thee ! My life is drawing to a close, an’ my spirit maun sune hae passed away. The lips of the auld can truly bless. Farewell, then. God bless thee !’

Ernest heard her not ; stern but calm he stood upon the spot where she had left him. His bright visions of glory and happiness dashed suddenly to the ground. His father’s anger,

certain as it was, seemed but the first link in a lifelong chain of sorrow. Vainly he strove to disbelieve. Vainly he strove to charm away all thoughts of sadness ; dark shades seemed interwoven with the brightness of the future, and the glory he had loved to picture grew suddenly dim.

‘So be it,’ he cried at last. ‘If glory and fame be faded, honour still remains to me. I will follow in her path. “Fais ce que dois advienne que pourra.” I will be true to my motto until death.’ And so saying he glanced hopefully, ardently, towards heaven, and reëntered the house. There we will follow him, and introduce you, gentle reader, to the other members of the family.

The ‘parlour,’ as the guest- or reception-room was then called, at least in the old Puritan families, was a dark old-fashioned chamber ; the simple furniture, the oaken wainscot, the sombre colouring was relieved by no ornament save the quaint and curious carving that told of other and brighter days. Two young girls were busied with different kinds of needlework. The eldest was scarcely twenty, but, grave and quiet in her bearing, seemed much older. Her face was fair ; her smile, when at rare intervals it lit up her features, was very winning ; her fair hair was drawn in two straight smooth bands beneath her snowy well-starched Puritan cap ; and a plain black dress, devoid of ornament, an apron with deep wide pockets, and a certain primness and neatness which pervaded her whole person, marked her as belonging to the Roundhead or Puritan party which of late years had arisen in the country. The hands of the maiden were busily employed in a manner suited to her sedate appearance, arranging and repairing pieces of household linen, while her eyes kept watch over the movements of a servant who was placing breakfast on the table.

The younger girl, who had not yet attained her sixteenth year, was in person and in dress entirely different. Her face was one of rare loveliness, bright, sparkling, beautiful. The lustrous brown eyes, the rich raven tresses, guiltless of restraint, the quick eager joyousness of her manner, the gay attire, and the small slight childish figure, made her seem like a very elfin

queen, whilst her employment of gold and silk embroidery was as graceful as it was frivolous.

The servant having retired, the elder of the two maidens, who for some time had been fidgeting on her seat uncertain whether or not to speak, was at length fairly roused to indignation by the clear sweet voice of her cousin, half chanting, half repeating a stanza of one of the earlier Royalist songs that afterwards became so popular.

‘For goodness’ sake, Alice, be quiet for a while, and distract not my poor head with thy vain songs. Thinkest thou not that a psalm, or some of those good hymns that the saintly George Gottenberg is wont to speak of, would better suit thy lips and thine age? Profane not, I beseech thee, this quiet dwelling of our ancestors with such worldly strains.’

Alice threw down her work, and replied, pouting a little as she did so :

‘Prithee, Mistress Ruth, let me sing as I list. The hymns and psalms are for the church, not the parlour. You forget,’ added she proudly, ‘I am a Royalist, Ruth.’

‘And I, thank Heaven, am a Puritan,’ answered the maiden, folding her hands demurely upon her white apron, and looking compassionately at her cousin.

‘I am glad you are grateful for *one* thing,’ said Alice archly.

‘For shame, Mistress Alice,’ said Ruth. ‘I trust we are thankful for all that hath been bestowed upon us.’

‘With the exception of bright colours, sweet voices, and fair faces—all of which, it would seem, should have been denied to the world, according to the Puritan code,’ replied Alice, laughing, and she resumed her work and her song.

Alice Leighton was the daughter of Catholic and Royalist parents, connections of the Heywards, whose family seat was at Fairleigh, but a few miles distant from the manor. It was now deserted and desolate. Sir Edward had fallen in one of the earlier battles of the civil war; his wife had soon followed him to the grave; his son, treading in his father’s footsteps, was fighting bravely, but too often unsuccessfully, for the King; and Alice resided with her kinsman, Master Heyward, to whose

youngest son, Ernest, she was betrothed. Though her home was in a Puritan family, and her guardian was a staunch supporter of 'the Parliament,' of which he had for some years been a member, she was treated with the utmost kindness and affection, and permitted the free practice of her religion, and the more than free expression of her political opinions; for Alice, though scarcely thirteen when she first came to reside there, had been too long the pet and companion of her mother not to have imbibed a considerable portion of her enthusiasm for the Stuarts; whilst the knowledge that her father had laid down his life in their cause made an impression upon her affectionate heart that years would rather deepen than destroy. Though rigid in the observance of his own religious duties, and anxious for the triumph of his party, Master Heyward was yet no fanatic, and in some ways seemed singularly tolerant; so much so, indeed, as to draw upon himself the comments and suspicions of Puritans more rigid than himself. 'What could he be dreaming of?' they said one to another, and not seldom to himself; 'how could he answer it to his conscience, to betroth his son to a Papist? And then they would hint, almost below their breath, that they half believed Ernest to be a Papist also, as every one knew his mother was, for he was never seen at church on Sunday. And on these occasions Master Heyward would turn the conversation, and feel vexed as well as guilty, remembering the weak moment, as he felt inclined to term it, when his dying wife had wrung from him the promise that her youngest and favourite son should be bred in the religion that was so dear to her. Often since then had he repented of his promise; but as a man of honour he kept it faithfully; and if he did not aid his son in the pursuit of religious knowledge and the performance of religious duties, he at least set no hindrance in his path, and permitted him to share in the instructions bestowed by Lady Leighton on her little daughter. When she died, and Alice became an inmate of her guardian's home, these instructions came naturally to an end, and were replaced by the no less earnest but less frequent counsels of the kind old priest of Fairleigh, or, as he was known in the country, Master Clifford. Though

the days of persecution were for a time gone by, though King Charles had need of the support of those whom he had before oppressed, and Cromwell was inclined to strengthen his party by a promise of religious toleration, the Catholics had as yet reaped little actual benefit, and the few priests were mostly in disguise, and only recognised as such by their scattered congregations. It was as the agent of the absent Major Leighton that Master Clifford held the small cottage on the borders of the Fairleigh estate, and in this capacity alone had become first acquainted with the Heywards; the modest little room there, poor and unadorned, could scarcely have been taken for a chapel, nevertheless it was very dear to the scattered but fervent little flock that, Sunday after Sunday, wound along the many rustic paths to hear the quiet Mass and listen to the few brief words of him who had braved imprisonment and death to come and live amongst them. Whilst battles were fought and truces made and broken in different parts of England, and the eyes of all were fixed upon the changing fortunes of the war, peace and tranquillity reigned in the quiet manor-house, where one day seemed the twin-sister of the other, and weeks were only counted by the regular recurrence of the Sabbath. It was a strange home for the gay Royalist maiden, whose earlier youth had passed so differently; but she was grateful for the cordial welcome given to her, and had besides that happy nature that makes great pleasures out of small ones, and sunshine out of everything. So long as the flowers bloomed and the sun shone and the birds sang, above all, as long as her own cherished hopes and dreams remained to her, Alice would be bright and happy and content. She was rather in awe of uncle Heyward, as she called him, but was fond of cousin Ruth; and with reason, for she was a good amiable girl, quiet and grave as her religion inculcated, loving her father and brothers with a fond but passionless affection, and looking to Alice with a kind of uncertain admiration, as something which she could not help loving, but of which she could not altogether approve. She was a careful ruler in her father's house, a kind friend to all who needed her support. She pitied the Royalists in their reverses; but her sympathies were on the

other side. She prayed for the triumph of her own party, yet lent a helping hand to the unfortunate stragglers of the King's army when they came to ask for food or shelter ; and when, after the battle of Newark, Edward Leighton had found time and opportunity for a visit to his orphaned sister, he had had no reason to complain of the greeting he received from her, of the hospitality dispensed by Ruth, or the fervid loyalty of Ernest, expressed in terms that would have much surprised his father had he been there. For Ernest said so little of his feelings, the atmosphere of the manor was so puritanical, the influences which surrounded him so constant in their pressure, that Master Heyward could scarcely conceive that the mother's teaching could survive, and that the son would really persevere in his devotion to a cause of which he heard and saw so little. His elder son, Charles, who somewhat resembled him in character, was in the Parliamentary army, and, favoured by Lambert and by Cromwell, he had shared in most of the battles of the last two years, having joined soon after the battle of Edgehill. He was at present at home on a short leave of absence ; but his furlough was drawing to a close, and he would soon return to his military duties. In his secret heart he hoped that his brother would accompany him, for Ernest was now eighteen, and old enough to choose a profession. Master Heyward shared the wish ; Ruth also, but less earnestly ; for was he not her favourite brother ; and how could she send him from her to the hardships and toils of war ? Of all that household Alice alone was in Ernest's secret ; she alone shared in his bright dreams, and blessed them with her loving approbation ; and when the eventful day dawned upon a sleepless night with a wealth of happy sunshine, she hailed it as an omen of success, alike for her sovereign and for her betrothed. And so, whilst Ruth sat and prayed over her work in mingled fear and hopelessness, Alice, gladder and more gay even than usual, gave vent to her excited feelings in the song that drew down upon her the grave remonstrance of her cousin.

Poor Alice, she was yet a child. She only dreamt of brightness in the coming hour, to which the more thoughtful Ernest

looked forward with a mingled dread. She longed to see the surprise of Ruth at Ernest's changed attire ; she longed to see him, her betrothed, her 'preux chevalier,' in garments so suited to his fair face and graceful person ; and her heart beat quickly from very gladness as the door opened gently and Master Heyward and his elder son entered the room together.

They were both dressed in the Roundhead fashion : the plain cut clothes, the steeple-crowned hat, which they laid on the table as they entered ; but while the father looked stern and severe, with a puritanic cast of features and slow measured tread, Charles' expression was more eager, more youthful, his costume less *outré*, his hair rather longer than was usual with his sect ; his step was firm and hasty, the flash of his eye soldier-like and proud ; and a sword hung by his side, expressive of his profession, though he wore no other arms.

Throwing aside her work, Alice started up with a merry laugh, which called forth a still deeper shade upon her guardian's brow ; but Ruth rose quietly and slowly, greeting her father with a demure curtsy, at the same time that Alice threw herself into his arms. The features of the Puritan relaxed into a kind of smile as he released himself from his ward's embrace and led her to the table.

'I see, my child,' said he, as his busy eye marked the richness of her attire ; 'I mark me that thou still lingerest in thine ungodly ways. Seest thou not the saintly wisdom of mine own good daughter, thy cousin Ruth, who walketh in all simplicity of heart and attire. What seest thou, mistress, that thou lookest so intently from the window ?'

'I was thinking how bright those flowers are,' said Alice simply ; 'and, be not offended, I was thinking how well they would look in my hair.'

'Take care, Mistress Alice, thou art over vain ; thy heart hungereth after the good things of this world. Think of the advice of the saintly George Gottenberg : then shalt thou "walk soberly and in all simplicity."' "

'Then shall I wear black garments and sing psalms,' said Alice, with a laugh. 'But here comes Ernest.'

A light step was now heard in the passage, and all with one accord looked towards the door. Master Heyward rose to welcome his son, but the words were frozen on his lips as the door opened and Ernest entered. Did he recognise his son in that rich and graceful dress, which so well became the slight frame, the fair open brow? or was it as a stranger that he first regarded him, as one to whom his sword rather than his hand should be given in greeting. The cavaliers of that day were a gorgeous company. Their costume has rarely been surpassed in brilliancy; but Ernest's was more quiet in colouring, though rich and costly in its details. The sword that glittered at his side had been Sir Edward Leighton's; the scarf had been the gift of Alice; and a half shy, half resolute, and wholly winning smile was on his lips as he lifted the plumed hat from his forehead and replied to his sister's exclamation with a fond embrace.

Little wonder that Master Heyward seemed at a loss for words; little wonder that his tone was harsh, as he at length broke silence; that, angry at what he deemed a boyish jest, he bade his son take off that masquerading dress, and assume the simple garb of the Roundhead soldier.

'Pardon me, father,' replied the youth, at once respectfully and firmly. 'If I have ventured to appear before you in a garb that you have learnt to hate, it is with a feeling of earnest and full conviction that I am called upon to wear it. From my childhood I have been a Royalist at heart; I have been an adherent of King Charles. I was silent because my arm was powerless; and though I longed to do service to my sovereign, I believed that England would assert her loyalty, and restore him to his lawful rights before I had attained my manhood. It has not been so; and whilst I grieve for the dearth of loyalty I rejoice that occasion has been given me to assert my own.'

His manner was so earnest, so manly, so utterly unlike the gay careless boy that they had hitherto considered him, that neither Master Heyward nor Charles could at first reply; then the father spoke, and sternly:

'Am I to understand that this is an espousal of the Royalist  
cause?' he said; and his eye darkened, his tone quivered with



suppressed indignant anger ; ‘ that it is thy purpose to abandon our holy cause, and to take upon thee that of him thou callest thy king ?’

‘ I have no cause to abandon, father ; I have not yet wielded my sword for King or Parliament ; nor can that cause be a holy one which is contrary to loyalty and honour.’

Alice clapped her hands ; her smile, her glance, her very presence, had been a powerful support to her betrothed.

‘ Mistress Alice, oblige me by not abetting thy cousin in his undutiful conduct,’ said her guardian sternly.

‘ And who should support him if not his betrothed ?’ said the girl proudly. But Ernest shook his head. He willed not that even she should step between him and his father, between him and the stern words which he pitied rather than resented. He wished to leave a peaceful home for his little Alice, when his care could shelter her no longer ; and so, at his unspoken wish, she rose and tripped lightly from the room, to pray in the silence of her own apartment for the success and welfare of her betrothed in a trial which she now beheld in its true and painful light. Not until her slight form had vanished from his sight did Ernest resume his speech, steadily confronting his father as he did so :

‘ My task is a hard one,’ he said earnestly. ‘ My affection for my home has striven with my duty ; but I must obey the voice that calls me, believing it to be the voice of Heaven.’

‘ The voice of thy self-will rather. Hear me, my son. This is indeed thy eighteenth birthday ; and behold thy choice is in thy hands, that thou shalt choose knowingly and abidingly the cause that henceforth thou shalt follow. Therefore do I now place them before thee. Which wilt thou be ?—a soldier in our righteous cause, under the command and in the favour of the godly General Lambert, with thy father and thy brother to counsel thee—the one in the seclusion of this our dwelling, the other in the stormy scenes of camp and battle-field, which thy ardent spirit hath led thee to prefer ; or—’

‘ Say no more, my father, I pray you,’ interrupted Ernest, for the first time, with a faint appearance of impatience, called

forth rather by the tone than by the actual words, by the remembrance of former scenes than by the present ; 'I have no taste for the duties you propose. I was not made for the fanatic zeal of Cromwell's soldiers. I could not be the friend of Lambert, whose maxims and whose sentiments are alike antagonistic to my own. I choose rather—'

'To follow in the evil ways of the Philistines. Then hear me, Ernest. My heart hath too long tolerated 'neath my roof the spirit of frivolity and error. I have given of my table to the ungodly, and behold, this is the reward which I reap. Who knoweth but what thy brother also may be led away from the right path, and adopt the vain manners and attire which are so displeasing to the hearts of all godly and righteous men ?'

From the moment of his brother's entrance Charles had been standing silent, half petrified with astonishment and grief, his head resting on his hand, as he leant against the chimney-piece, and eagerly listened to his father's words. He had occasionally started at some unusually stern expression, and now, on hearing his own name, he turned round and spoke earnestly :

'Thy son is not so easily led away from the good cause ;' and the tone seemed proud. 'Nor did he think that the zeal with which he hath ever upheld the liberties of his country would so soon be called in question ; but thou, Ernest, my brother, why hast thou done this ?'

'Because,' replied Ernest, 'I am not as you are : my faith, my loyalty, my mother's teaching, have urged me to a step which you have been taught to shun. And yet the cause that I uphold is not a new one, but one which has been sacred in the nation for many a century of prosperity.'

'Silence, my son !' returned Master Heyward. 'Strive not to pervert the steadfast mind of thine own good brother. Strive rather, like him, to persevere in truth and godliness, and cast off thy vain manners, and return to the simple customs of thy childhood.'

Ernest made a movement of impatience, but catching his brother's eye, restrained himself and was silent.

Master Heyward resumed :

‘Hear me, my son. Perchance it is now the last time that these lips will speak to thee the counsels of righteousness and wisdom. Cast off the frivolity of thy youth, and put on the staid and holy aspect which should characterise thy maturer years; but if thou wilt still hearken to the unseemly follies of the Malignants, take up thy sword and thine armour, and prove the bridle of thy steed; for this house may no longer be defiled by the presence of aught unholy, and a Philistine may not stand before the righteous and godly.’

A look of pain passed over Charles’ features, and he stepped forward as if to speak; but Ernest turned to his father, speaking in low earnest tones:

‘I had expected this,’ he said sadly. ‘Had you not bade me leave you I had gone hence. My vocation calls me to the camp and battle-field, to the service of King Charles.’

He glanced fondly at his sister. Ruth was sitting in her accustomed place; her hands had fallen on her knee, the tears streamed down her cheek. Ernest sighed deeply. His hand was already on the door; yet he paused, irresolute, and for a moment a bitter struggle rose in his mind. His father’s anger, none the less that it was cold and calm, weighed heavily upon him. Deep and true had been the bond between them. The motherless boy had leant with a double love on the parent who remained to him. Bitter indeed the pang, but the tie must be broken; and as Ernest glanced upon his father a feeling of more than sorrow dimmed his eye, and again a foreboding of evil was within him. Charles came forward, laying his hand upon his brother’s arm:

‘Tarry yet a moment, Ernest; and be not in haste to quit thy father’s house; let us forget a while the cause that separates us, and partake of somewhat to refresh the outward man.’

‘It is better not. It is best that we should part at once,’ said Ernest, and he warmly pressed the hand extended to him. He kissed his sister’s brow, and then turned once more to Master Heyward:

‘These are not the fancies of a moment, father, easily called forth, and as easily forgotten. They were maxims learnt at my mother’s knee, when I listened to tales of loyalty and faith.

They have grown in my heart since the earliest days of childhood, and have been my stay till now. In following their dictates I follow that of my heart and of my conscience ; and for naught else would I thus leave you. Father, you have bid me hence ; so be it. My fortunes lead me to the camp and battle-field ; to danger, struggle, death, perchance. O, father, by the memory of my Royalist mother let thy forgiveness and thy friendship go with me !

‘Thy mother was a good woman, Ernest, albeit her cause was an erring one. When I see thee resemble her, my son, then for her sake may I forgive thee.’

Ernest bent and passionately pressed the half-reluctant hand to his lips, then he hurried from the room. Charles followed him.

‘It is hard to part thus, Ernest’ he said half reproachfully ; ‘and to think that in a few short days we may meet as foes. Dear brother, would that the presence of a Philistine had never shed its influence upon thee ! Let us at least part now in peace, and be brothers still in heart, whatever may befall us. Farewell. God bless thee, Ernest, and redeem thee from thine erring ways !’

He clasped his brother in one long silent embrace, and abruptly left him.

Ernest looked after him, and a sigh, almost a sob, burst from his lips.

‘So good, so true, so noble, yet wedded to such a cause !’ he said. ‘So loyal to the duties of friendship and of kindred, yet so blinded in his judgment of his king.’

He passed hurriedly down-stairs. On the threshold of her own room Alice was waiting for him.

‘O, Ernest ! what have they said to you ?’ she cried, as she caught sight of his flushed and saddened features.

He took her hands in his ; then, as her large dark eyes half-inquiringly, half-wonderingly met his own, he bent and kissed the small white fingers which rested so confidently in his, and whispered :

‘Farewell, sweet Alice !’

‘Not going? O, Ernest, my own dear *brother!*’ using the endearing appellation of her childhood; ‘you *must* not, *will* not leave us.’

‘And how then am I to serve King Charles and restore him to his unhappy country if I linger with thee, little Alice, in this dear old home of ours, which is now mine no longer? How can I do the brave deeds and win the many fights of which we have so often dreamt together? how take to myself the name of Royalist, and Cavalier, and Catholic, if I permit my King to be dethroned, and the Puritans to triumph, and loyalty to become a reproach in the land without a struggle or a sacrifice? No, no, sweet Alice; the time has come when I am called to leave thee.’

His voice shook and faltered with emotion, proving more than did his words that the struggle had been a hard one. But he dashed the tears from his eyes, he steadied the tremor of his voice, to part from that fair child with a shade at least of hope and gladness.

‘Weep not, my own Alice,’ he said tenderly, for her tears were falling fast, and were not, like his own, brushed away. ‘It was not with tears that we beheld the future that has now dawned above us. It is not with grief and with foreboding that your knight must go forth to battle.’

‘And what does Charles say?’ asked Alice, returning, maybe, to those old dreamy hopes that Charles might be led to follow the example of his younger brother. It had been a false hope, a very false one, one that would have been impossible to hearts less sanguine than those of Ernest and of Alice. With the first it had died away even in that short scene through which he had just passed.

‘Charles says little, but thinketh much; his words are kind, for his heart is generous; but he thinks me, no less than does my father, an alien from the right, a blot on our escutcheon. What dost thou think, my Alice?’

‘You are a martyr to your country,’ she said passionately, ‘my own noble generous Ernest. I cannot tell you all that this has made you to me.’

‘Farewell then, sweet child, my own dear Alice ; God bless and protect you !’ And again raising the little hand and pressing it to his lips, he hurried from her presence.

‘Farewell, *dear Ernest,*’ answered Alice with deep emotion. ‘Be true to your cause, and Alice will never forget you.’

A parting wave of the hand and he was gone ; and Alice retired to her room, to recover from the shock and remove the tell-tale tear-stains from her cheek before returning to the breakfast-table.

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## CHAPTER II.

‘For some were there to praise and some to blame.’

For a few minutes Alice pondered sadly and anxiously over the recent parting with her betrothed. It had been long expected, long dreamt of, in one sense eagerly hoped for ; and now it had come. It had not brought with it that pure unmixed rejoicing that it had worn in her imagination. Looking from a distance, she had seen honour and loyalty and victory in one bright picture, a little too bright, too shadowless, to be quite possible, as children’s visions usually are. There had been no thought then of stern rebuke, parental anger ; no question of contending claims, no hard struggle to be fought, no wrenching away of ties that were a part of the very nature of him who was called upon to break them. If sorrow or difficulty or struggle had been woven into the bright web at all, it had been done in a dreamy undefined way, dwelling scarcely ever upon the shadows and revelling in girlish exuberance and ecstasy over the sunshine of the victory. This was over now, and Alice read on the features of her betrothed the sorrow and the sadness of his heart. The sight made her sorry also ; but she was still too much a child to feel as he did. She loved him very much and would be very desolate without him, but her pride in his courage and loyalty supported her ; and after a few hot tears, a few earnest but childlike wishes that he might win a great many battles and come back to her a hero, she rose

and went to the window to mark the road that he had taken. As she did so she became aware that a woman was standing near it, dark-looking, aged, and strangely weird in her appearance. It was the same who had been seen by Ernest.

‘Tarry yet an instant, lady,’ she said, as the girl shrunk back half frightened at the keenness of her gaze. ‘I should know that face, methinks, an’ it’s a bonnie ane; but be that as it may, I read for thee a happy lot. A few dark clouds upon thy spring-time may be, but the sun shines brightest after rain. And think na I deceive thee; na, na. I am but an auld woman, but I come frae a northern land, where the prophecies of seers are wont na to be slighted. Fareweel.’ And she turned as if to go.

‘Nay, stay awhile,’ said the girl anxiously; and the entreaty tone recalled the stranger to her side. ‘I know you not, yet I would fain believe you; and tell me, if my fate be happy, there are others of whom I would fain inquire. There is one gone forth to battle. There—’

‘Maiden, I know it not,’ replied the seer, after a moment of almost painful hesitation. ‘This only can I tell thee: happiness will be thy lot, and such maun also be the lot of him on whom *thy* happiness depends.’

As she spoke her voice gained an accent, as it were, of prophecy, her eyes glittered with an unearthly light. The sun, streaming through the branches, lit up her venerable features, and so majestic, though so weirdlike, was her form that Alice gazed at her like one transfixed, until with a parting word she turned away and was lost among the trees.

‘What a wonderful woman!’ said Alice to herself; ‘and what glad comfort she has brought me. She almost frightened me at first, and yet her words were kind. She is like those seers that Ernest’s mother used to speak of. Poor Ernest! and yet I will not fear for him. My lot is to be happy, and my happiness depends on his. Clouds in my spring-time, in my youth, but a bright and glorious summer. Heigho! there are clouds already. I never dreamt this day would be so sorrowful.’ And half-sighing, half-smiling, she returned to the parlour.

Ruth was at the head of the table, but her cheek was pale and her tears fell fast and silently as she busied herself with her accustomed duties. She had been so fond of Ernest, and now he had deserted her. Master Heyward wore a graver look even than was usual with him; and Charles was seated near him, his head resting on his hand. He started up as his young cousin entered, and was about to speak, but his father stopped him.

‘Enter not into conversation with the Philistine, my son. The deceitful snares of the Evil One have perverted thy brother, and the smooth tongue and vain beauty of a child have corrupted his ways. And thou, maiden,’ he added, addressing his bewildered ward, ‘repent and amend thy ways, lest the sword of retribution fall upon thee, and—’

‘Nay, but father,’ said Ruth, ‘the maiden meaneth no evil; her ways are those of her fathers, and her speech the unconscious prattle of a child. And, sooth to say, father,’ she added in a troubled tone, ‘the ill is not only of her making, for another hath been among us; and Edward Leighton hath added his persuasions to those of his sister.’

‘What,’ cried Master Heyward angrily, a ‘*Philistine* hath darkened my threshold! a *Malignant* hath cast his baneful shadow over my dwelling! My children have given him to drink, and my servants have ministered unto him. Alas, alas, my children; the glory of our house is gone for ever!’ And as though overcome by the thought, the old man leant back in his chair and covered his face.

‘We meant no harm, father,’ said Ruth, weeping still more bitterly. ‘We could not turn the wanderer and the homeless from our door, nor the kinsman from our hearth.’

‘Peace, daughter,’ answered the Roundhead, his countenance resuming its usual calm aspect. ‘Thou hast done unwisely; thou hast given food and shelter to the Malignant, and how hath he repaid thee? He hath cast a shadow on the mansion of his protector; he hath sown the seed of discord where peace had before existed.’

Alice looked up, a shade of indignation on her brow.



‘My brother,’ she said proudly, ‘is no man to promote discord or to disturb peace.’

‘Sayest thou so, young mistress?’ said Charles gravely. ‘Methinks thou knowest not as yet what meaneth peace. Go to the saintly George Gottenberg, fair cousin, and ask him to explain it to thee.’

‘That were needless,’ retorted Alice, ‘seeing that his answer is already known to me. “Peace,” saith the good man, “is a virtue that existeth among the godly and for them alone; they that walk gravely and with modesty, shunning vain raiment and unseemly laughter, in them existeth the peace of the heart.” Good lack, good lack! if such be peace, I have little of it. You see I know my lesson,’ she added, running on as though to postpone the angry and indignant answer which she foresaw, rather than because her heart was really gay or insensible to the sorrow she beheld. ‘Peace for the godly, is it? or for those who call themselves such. Ah, me! for poor England if Cromwell is victorious. No more jewels, no more laces, no more songs or dances round the Maypole! Well-a-day, well-a-day!’

‘Thou art too bold, maiden,’ said Master Heyward sternly, to make fun of the desolation in which thy evil influence has cast us. Knowest thou not that it was the perverting speeches of thyself and brother that led my unhappy son from the right path and delivered him over to the delusions of the Evil One? But enough of this for the moment. The outer man needeth refreshment, and the breakfast getteth cold by long waiting. Therefore draw in thy chair, Charles; and, Ruth, call hither George Gottenberg, that his presence may cheer our hearts and his grace bring a blessing to our breakfast.’

Ruth retired and presently returned with the minister. He was an old man with hard features and a profusion of grizzly hair, surmounted by the steeple-crowned hat of the Puritan party (this he removed on entering the parlour). Being rather lame he hobbled along with the assistance of a knotted crabstick, and, to complete the picture, he usually bore under his left arm a huge Bible, from which he was wont to select the texts with which his discourse usually abounded. To-day, how-

ever, in the agitated condition of his feelings consequent on Ruth's hasty recital of the morning's scene, he left it behind him, and his conversation was therefore less edifying than usual.

The family rose to greet him as he entered, and Alice brought him a chair with as good a grace as she could, whilst inwardly comparing his voice, manner, and appearance with those of her revered friend Master Clifford, greatly, it must be confessed, to the disadvantage of the former.

'The hand of affliction hath weighed heavily upon thee, my friend,' said he in his harshest of tones; 'and the snares of the Philistines are around thee. As the bird in the meshes of the fowler, so is thy son in the snares of the ungodly; and who hast thou to thank for it, thinkest thou?' he asked. 'Who but thyself and yon ungodly maiden, whom thou hast admitted to thy dwelling and brought up among thy children. And how hath thy folly ended? As thou mightest have expected that it would end—in the betrayal of the confidence reposed in her, in darkness, and in desolation to thine hearth. Like the viper that stingeth the hand that feedeth it, so hath she brought sorrow and impiety into the house of her benefactor.'

'The breakfast getteth cold and the time passeth,' interrupted mild Mistress Ruth; 'and with all due reverence, thy congregation await thee at nine of the clock, pious friend.'

'Thou art right, maiden,' answered the minister. 'Verily, I thank thee that thou hast reminded me of my duties. True, they are so great and so many, that I am apt at times to forget the one in the consideration of the other. May I thank you to pass me a pot of ale, young mistress (a large one, and it pleaseth thee), and a slice of that roast loin.'

Ruth complied with his request. Grace was said, and winding it up with a prayer for the confusion of the Malignants and the destruction of his enemies, the pious George Gottenberg sat down to enjoy his breakfast.

It was not yet mid-day, but Ernest Heyward was already far on his way. He was well informed of the movements of the King. Edward Leighton had been made aware of his in-

tention and would meet him at a little village on the road ; they would pass the night with some Royalist friends, and hoped to reach the army in good time next day.

It had been a rather quiet campaign that summer ; few battles of consequence, few skirmishes even ; but nevertheless the Royalist hopes had never been so languishing, and even Prince Rupert, bold, brave, and sanguine as he was, had been constant in his efforts for peace. He had been overruled, but not convinced ; he had striven loyally, but with little heart or hope, for their resources were at an end. Oxford had been besieged, and the King shut out for many weeks from the loyal old city, which had been his head-quarters throughout the war. Discontent and rivalry and jealousy were rife amongst his supporters, and recruits were very scarce, whilst thousands flocked to join his foes. It was but a few days before the battle of Naseby that Ernest set forth to join his King ; in four months from that time the campaign would be ended, in so far at least as the generalship of Charles I. was concerned. It would be long before the final efforts of his friends would cease to rouse the chivalry of England in their proud and well-loved cause.

There were many sad and anxious thoughts in Ernest's mind as he rode swiftly along ; the path was one of danger ; there were many detachments of the foe scattered over the country ; his brother's troop he knew was not far distant ; their destination was the same as his, though their errand was so different. But it was not fear that made his brow so thoughtful, his heart so sad, in the midst of all the laughing beauty of the summer, the trilling of wild birds, the varied colours of the flowers, the soft scented breeze, the ripple of little streams ; it was sorrow at the scene through which he had passed so recently ; love for the father from whom he had so lately parted, and whose farewell had seemed so bitter. And yet he was too loyal, too chivalrous, above all too youthful, for the sorrow and anxiety to reign uncontested in his heart. Bright thoughts were there also, loyalty to his king and dreams of chivalry and honour.

Suddenly a low distant tramp of horses proceeding rapidly along a rough road gave warning of approaching danger ; and, looking back, he became aware that a party of Levellers were advancing towards him by the very way that he had himself traversed so recently. He could see the sun gleaming on their iron scull-caps and the heavy armour of their leader ; and ever and anon a brighter gleam gave evidence of a sword-blade, as it glittered for a moment and was returned to its sheath.

Close to where Ernest stood was the entrance to a thick copse ; and a silver streamlet, murmuring through the brush-wood, foamed and sparkled a few yards from his horse's feet. Here lay his chance of escape, and a poor one it seemed. Right before him lay the bare sandy heath, without a tree or a shrub, the hot sun falling direct upon it ; behind him full twenty troopers, on strong swift horses, evidently approaching him. Had they seen him ? He knew not ; the chances were in his favour. A single horseman, moving unobtrusively under the shadow of the elm-trees which formed the hedgerow which bounded the common on that side, was not likely to attract much notice, even from a band of Levellers. However, no time was to be lost. Hastily dismounting, he drew his horse cautiously into the copse. He led it on some distance ; and then, bending the boughs so as to form a screen, not only from the sun, but from the prying eyes of the troopers, he crept back and carefully effaced the traces that his passage had left behind him. Scarcely had he done so, and again concealed himself, when the loud tramp of horses announced the approach of his foes. Nearer and nearer they came, and, halting at last within a few yards of the fugitive, dismounted and led their horses to the brook.

As Ernest peered out from among the branches, he had a good view of the leader of the troop. He was standing back to him ; but the gigantic form, the heavy armour, the wide shoulders, and thick blackish-brown hair, momentarily released from his skull-cap, formed a picture not often met with, even in those wild times, but once seen not easily forgotten. Something in his stern harsh tones came back as in a dream to the concealed cavalier. It seemed as if he had seen this man before ; and

when, attracted by some rustling near him, the trooper turned round, it was with a start of surprise that Ernest recognised in him the personal attendant and right-hand man of his brother Charles.

It was a curious scene, and one of awful interest to the Heyward family, could they have been spectators of it. The thick dark copse, the strong proud-looking horses, the stern firm chief, the implacable hater of the Royalists and the most puritanical of his sect, his eagle-eye wandering here and there among the bushes; and a few steps farther off, hidden in the fern, the Royalist brother of that man's master; the boy who had been wont to listen to his old war-stories, now listening with beating heart and anxious ear to the words which fell slowly from his lips, watching his every movement, and feeling that on these very movements depended his fortune and his fate. His noble steed stood by his side, nor raised his stately head, nor cropped the herbage at his feet, as though he knew that there was danger near. And as Ernest waited he heard his brother's name, and the chief spoke.

'Major Heyward will scarcely overtake us, an his horse be not a swift one.'

'Major Heyward is it, comrade? I warrant me he has something else to think of. Ah, well, poor man! My heart sorroweth for him. To think that *his* brother should be a Malignant after all.'

'He'd better not come in *my* way,' growled the chief. 'I little thought that a son of the zealous Master Heyward would have so disgraced himself.'

'You know the family, then?'

'Of course I do,' answered the soldier angrily. 'And it would have been as well for Master Ernest had I *not* known them. Well for him that he is out of my reach at this moment.'

As he spoke Ernest started slightly in his concealment, and a decayed branch against which he had been partly leaning snapped in two.

'What was that?' asked a soldier of his companions.

'A wood-pigeon, or perchance a squirrel,' answered the man composedly. 'Art afeard, comrade?'

'No,' retorted the chief; 'but in these days of treachery it is well to be prepared. To horse!'

'Nay, stay a moment,' said one who had not yet spoken. 'There is no cause for alarm, and I would fain speak with thee. Heardest thou whither this recreant brother of our Major hath directed his steps?'

'Nay, I know not,' answered the soldier; 'neither do I care, so that we meet not; for if we met—' His face grew dark with an unuttered threat. A fierce invective seemed about to break from his lips; but he crushed his passion with a strong hand, and his tones were scarcely more stern than was their wont as he turned towards his men and bade them mount.

'To horse, to horse, my masters; for the day weareth on apace, and we have a long and weary ride before us.'

With these words he sprang into the saddle, and his men following his example, they rode off.

After a short pause Ernest rose to his feet, and glanced cautiously through the branches. The Levellers were already out of sight. He did not, however, venture to leave his retreat, but, kneeling on the green moss-covered bank, he uttered a short but fervent thanksgiving for his wonderful escape. Then, leading his horse through the tangled brushwood, he directed his steps to an open spot, where, releasing Fero's bridle, he left him at peace to browse the fresh herbage, and drink of the same stream which had so lately afforded refreshment to his foes. Afterwards he proceeded on his journey.

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### CHAPTER III.

'We, too, are friends to loyalty.' COOPER.

It was some three or four days before the battle of Naseby, and the Royalist forces were drawn up in the neighbourhood of Daventry, in Northamptonshire.

The King, together with his principal officers, was standing in his tent busily discussing the plans for the following day, when the Earl of Laneric entered, and requested the honour of a few moments' parlance with his Majesty. Charles bowed courteously; and having signified a gracious assent, the officers withdrew to one side, and allowed the Earl to approach.

'We wait with impatience to know in what way we can serve our valiant and faithful subject,' said the King, with the winning courtesy so familiar to the Stuarts. 'It is but seldom that, in our present straitened circumstances, we have it in our power to oblige even those to whom we find ourselves the most indebted.'

A sigh passed the Earl's lips, for he knew that, despite the fair words of his sovereign, there was one dear and near of kin to him who, in his mind, had received scant meed of justice, let alone reward, for long and faithful service. But it was not the King whom he blamed, rather the advisers of the King and the fate that had thrown a shadow dark, if undeserved, over the fortunes of the Duke of Hamilton. He bowed low as he replied:

'My petition, gracious Sovereign, is this: I would fain introduce to your Majesty's notice a young man in whom I am interested, alike from distant ties of kinsmanship and the ardour which has led him to desert home, friends, and even his betrothed, in the hope of striking a blow for your Majesty.'

'Indeed, a most loyal youth,' said the King, whilst his officers drew nearer and listened with interest and attention. 'Such enthusiasm is a most welcome attribute in a soldier, even though,' he added, turning with a cheerful smile to his assembled courtiers, 'thanks to the innate nobility of England's sons and their fidelity to their King, it can scarcely be considered as a rarity. We pray you to admit him speedily into our presence, and would at the same time be made acquainted with his name.'

Laneric bowed and retired, and in a few moments returned in company with Major Leighton and Ernest.

A slight murmur of surprise ran round the circle as they entered, excited by the youthful appearance of the young cava-

lier. He himself did not notice it. His glance was at once directed towards the King—to that monarch who had been to him his one ideal of all that was most pure and noble, and whose cause he longed so earnestly to espouse. He was not disappointed. There was something in the calm grave face before him, with its touch of sadness and its high-born beauty, that won the young soldier, who was already prepared and eager to be won; and even to the latest hour of his life that moment was never effaced from his remembrance. It was a solemn step that he had taken, and the crisis of a man's life is not to be easily forgotten. There is a sacredness in that one step that links the fortunes of a life together, that forms the centre of a lengthened chain of hopes, of fears, of pain, of sorrow, of lasting joy or endless misery—a step that is once taken, perhaps hastily, yet bears our lives along with it, this world and all its changes, and perhaps the next world too, with its eternal changelessness. Ernest's had not been a hasty choice. It had been pondered on, dreamt of for long months, for long years, amid the quiet and solitude of an uneventful youth; but the last step usually seems a hasty one. It was like a strange dream in its sudden fulfilment of a long, long yearning; that gay scene was a dazzling thing to him after the calm repose of Edgeleigh; that grave, calm, royal-looking face before him seemed strangely and intensely beautiful after the stern and ascetic countenance of his Puritan relations.

The King advanced a step as the officers approached.

'A noble-looking youth truly, Laneric, and one whom we shall be glad to see about our person. His name?'

'Ernest Heyward, your Majesty, of Edgeleigh, in Worcestershire.'

Ernest here advanced, and, kneeling on one knee, kissed the hand which the King extended to him.

'You spoke of him as kinsman, Laneric, yet he does not bear your name. We would that it had been so, for 'tis a gallant race; but this young soldier will win lustre for his own.'

The Earl's face lit with satisfaction at this speech, though the smile was rather sad. His dearest and truest had fallen



fighting for the same cause in which Ernest so joyfully enrolled himself; but perhaps he thought less of them than of the brother who still pined in prison, watching from afar the great and fearful conflict in which he would have held a brave if not victorious part. Perhaps the King remembered also, for he checked his speech, and turning to his new adherent, addressed to him a few gracious words. He then called the Earl aside, to confer with him on the appointment of his kinsman to some suitable position.

Major Leighton, having made his obeisance, carried off Ernest to the farther end of the tent, and introduced him to some of his future brothers-in-arms.

'Allow me first, Ernest, to introduce you to the Marquis of Hertford,' said Edward, indicating to him a tall stately officer, with grave stern features, grayish hair, and quick searching eyes, which rested on him at that moment with a glance of inquiry and interest.

'Permit me, Lord Hertford, to introduce to you a young kinsman of mine, who, as the grandson of your old friend, Mr. Middleton, must, I think, be not unknown to you by name.'

'Ernest Heyward—Lord Hertford.'

Ernest bowed; but the General stepped forward and extended his hand, which our hero grasped respectfully.

'You must not look upon me as a stranger, young man,' said Hertford, with a look of transitory emotion. 'I am not, or rather *was* not always, unknown to your family. You are not the only son of Master Heyward, I presume? I have a faint remembrance of a boy named Charles; but we have long lost sight of each other.'

'He is not on our side,' said Ernest.

'Humph! Followed the father's opinions, I suppose. Well, Master Heyward, you have chosen well; may you persevere. But there is no fear of your not doing *that*,' he added, as he marked the bright flush on the boy's cheek and the bright light in his eye. 'But farewell for the present. You have other friends to make, and I have other duties to perform. I will not detain you.' He shook Ernest's hand once more, and turned away

with a sigh. 'So like, so *very* like,' he muttered; and thus with a quick gesture dismissing the thoughts to which the meeting had given rise, he left the tent, whilst Edward Leighton again addressed his cousin.

'That is one of our best generals, Ernest; firm, decided, and at the same time prudent. I don't know what we should do without him. He has considerable influence too, being at one time the governor of His Royal Highness Prince Charles.'

'He has a nice countenance,' said Ernest.

'Yes; a little stern, methinks; but a good heart, *à fond*. And after all, where discipline is usually so lax, firmness in a general is a great thing. He says more than he does though in the way of severity. But now, having introduced you to the grave and prudent Lord Hertford, allow me to present you to his utter contrast—to the volatile but, I believe, good-hearted Henry Seymour; without exception the most amusingly good-tempered, reckless, loquacious, interfering, incomprehensible individual that I ever met with.' And even as he spoke a stranger advanced carelessly, though at the same time somewhat hastily, to meet him.

'Well, Colonel, how goes the world to-day?'

'The outer world or the inner world, Major Leighton? Which means out of the camp or in the camp. Why, saying that Laneric is in a fever of excitement about something or other, and Hertford too rapt in thought to answer a civil question, and that the country looks much the same as usual, and a few straggling parties of Roundheads are scouring the neighbourhood, and can find no one to run after them, I don't see that there is much to say about anything. Ah, who is this?' as his eye suddenly fell upon Ernest. 'I beg your pardon,' he added, with a laugh, 'I did not see you; but I am very glad to see you for all that. You are General Middleton's great-nephew, are you not, and cousin-german to Laneric's wife? And I am Colonel Seymour, who has been named to you before in not the most favourable way,' he added, with a smile, half-mischievous, half-careless, as he turned to Major Heyward.

'I assure you, Colonel Seymour,' began Edward—

'I assure you, sir, you are already forgiven. If none of my friends said any worse of me— However, I have not finished my conversation with your friend. You have left your home, have you,' he added, turning to Ernest, 'to follow the fortunes of King Charles? We have not been long in finding out all about you, you see. Well, I'm glad to see you. I hope you are not offended at my negligence in not before observing you. The sun was in my eyes; and besides my thoughts are apt to carry me away. You'll have been told, I daresay, what a particularly silent man I am, and rather bashful. Never *you* be so, young man. Break yourself of the habit whilst you are young; I tried too late, and you see the effect. I must remain dumb for the remainder of my life. Stay, I don't think we have shaken hands. There, I am never at ease until that ceremony is concluded; it helps to break the ice.'

Ernest believed that as far as the Colonel was concerned the ice was already broken; he was indeed somewhat surprised at the loquacity of his new acquaintance, contrasting it with the grave calm greeting of Lord Hertford and the cordial but somewhat condescending welcome of Lord Laneric. Before he could reply, however, Seymour was again addressing himself to Edward.

'Major Leighton,' he said, 'I believe you are wanted; at least I heard your name mentioned just now. If you would like to go I will initiate this young friend of ours into some of our doings, and introduce him, if not to the persons, at least to the *characters* of his more important comrades. O, never fear; I won't be malicious, and he would not like you to neglect your duties for him. Will you trust yourself to my guidance, young sir?'

'Certainly,' replied Ernest, with a smile, as he watched the discomfiture on his cousin's face. 'If Major Leighton be engaged, I shall be very grateful for your kindness.'

'But seriously, Colonel Seymour, did you hear my name?'

'Have I not told you so?' said the Colonel in a surprised tone. 'You had better be quick too, Leighton. Lord Digby is not too famous for patience.'

Edward uttered an exclamation of annoyance.

‘Digby, why could you not have told me at once? I would not have kept him waiting for the world. Where is he?’

‘Ah, that I don’t know,’ said Seymour. ‘He was in his tent a minute since. He may be anywhere by this time.’

‘Well, I must be off then,’ said the Major. ‘You will excuse me, Ernest; and you will be sure to bring him to the *levée* this evening, Seymour, if I am not at liberty. And above all,’ he added gravely, ‘do not set him against his superior officers with your idle talk.’

The Colonel’s handsome face clouded momentarily with a frown, but a smile succeeded it.

‘Thanks, Major Leighton,’ he muttered, as Edward left them. ‘I consider that speech unwarranted, and shall act as I choose upon the matter. I beg your pardon, again, young sir. What shall we do, and whither shall we go to pass the time?’

‘That you will be better able to decide, Colonel Seymour,’ said Ernest, smiling. ‘As yet I am quite a stranger.’

‘Then we will make a circuit of the camp; and we can talk as we go. By the bye, what am I to call you?’

‘My name is Heyward,’ said the young man.

‘And your Christian name is Ernest—that I know already. But I would learn by what title I am to address you. Are you captain, lieutenant, or what?’

‘Neither the one nor the other at present, though I hope to be something of the kind very soon.’

‘Well then I suppose we must wait, and leave his Majesty to decide for us, unless you would prefer me to confer it on you beforehand. Do you see those tents?’ he added, pointing to a group at some distance, distinguished from those around them by their superior size.

‘Yes,’ replied Ernest. ‘I presume they belong to the King and his suite?’

‘They do,’ returned his lordship. ‘The largest is the present abode of our sovereign lord King Charles—a spacious inclosure truly for a crowned head to rest in. Such are the dire effects of civil war, my young friend. You sigh. Well, it is

natural, although at your age I gloried in the prospect of a fight. You were about to speak? Pray do not let any consideration for *my* feelings prevent you from interrupting me when so disposed. That is a thing to which I am accustomed.'

'I was about to observe that it was not at the prospect of a battle that I sighed, but at the discomfort to which our royal master was subjected.'

'O, so you have caught the Stuart fever, have you, Heyward? It is one that does you honour. Yes, our King has much to put up with; but if it all ends well, he may be glad of the troubles which have brought forth such loyalty. I had intended to give you a description of our monarch and his more important generals—a very good thing for a soldier to know; but as you seem already to have formed your opinion of his Majesty, and as, moreover, it might be treason to say too much about the shadier side of his character, I will only hope that he may appreciate, as it deserves, the enthusiasm of so devoted an adherent. The most prominent position in the army is a goal that you are perhaps too young to aspire to; so I hope it will be given to me. The tent to the right belongs to Lord Digby, the Secretary of State.'

'And where are Lord Hertford's quarters?' asked Ernest.

Seymour looked curiously at him.

'Why, you don't mean to say you care to know *that*? Are you going to try and make his acquaintance? And if so, is it because of any report that has reached you of his bravery or skill, or because you consider him a *lusus naturæ*—the most prudent man in his Majesty's camp? Come, then, and if his most high and potent lordship is in presence, I will introduce you to him.'

'I have already had that honour; but I thank you all the same. Major Leighton was kind enough to introduce me.'

'Ah, true; Leighton is an admirer of his. I wonder if you will follow suit. What do you think of him—tall, stern, portly, and prudent. Well, I hope you will get on with him. Don't let him infect you with his prudence, or I shall give you up altogether. But I daresay by *that* time you will have given up

me. Well, I think I have given you my opinion pretty freely; and as to the King and the two Princes it is wise to say nothing about them.'

'I do not think you have mentioned the Duke of Hamilton,' said Ernest.

'I fancied you knew. He is not with the army, but in deep disgrace.'

'For what reason?'

'Well, it is a somewhat long story, and I don't know the rights of it. The Duke has enemies. They have influence with the King. They represented that the Duke was conspiring against the Crown. He and his brother were arrested. Laneric escaped, but Hamilton was imprisoned at Pendennis. I am sorry for his grace. Do you know Claude Hamilton?'

'No.'

'You will like him, I think; and he will like you. You are made for each other, I am convinced. But now we must hasten our steps, or we shall be late for the *levée*.'

They accordingly walked on together through the camp, now conversing on one subject, now on another. Speaking on the state of military discipline or other camp-affairs, or undergoing a minute cross-examination upon his own, Ernest listened to the long harangues of his companion, or stayed a moment to be presented to some future comrade, or to enter the tent of some particular officer to whom the Colonel deemed it advisable to introduce him; and at length returned to the King's tent in time for the afternoon *levée*. Here Major Leighton rejoined them, annoyance plainly written upon his countenance at the fruitless and impromptu errand on which Seymour had sent him.

On the following morning Ernest was appointed to a vacant lieutenancy, and in virtue of his new office took part a few days later in the fatal battle of Naseby, the last in which the King commanded, and one of the most signal defeats that the Royalists had sustained.

It was not a happy beginning; and the young soldier was grievously disappointed with this his first initiation into the art of war; but his loyalty was only quickened by the new

misfortunes of his sovereign, and his courage and gallantry in action won him the warm encomium of his superiors.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

‘ A settled calm on the sweet pale face.’ AUSTYN GRAHAM.

REVERSE after reverse was to be thenceforth the portion of the gallant Royalist army. The King marched to Ludlow, thence through Shropshire and Denbighshire to Doncaster, everywhere pursued by tidings of fresh disasters—towns and villages surrendering to his enemies almost without a blow. Gallant friends and supporters he still had ; he was even joined by new ones ; and the armies under Gerrard and Goring were as yet unsubdued ; but his one great hope was to join Montrose, whose efforts in Scotland had been attended with marvellous success. From this, however, he was dissuaded by his friends, who believed less than he did in the ultimate success of this celebrated general, whose forces were moreover scanty, and whose resources must presently be exhausted. Indeed, not many weeks were to elapse before rumours would be spread abroad much less flattering to his wishes and schemes than the brilliant commencement of the expedition had given reason to expect. Despatching northward a small detachment of horse, Charles determined to remain in England and fight his way back to Oxford, that loyal old city which had always proved so true to him.

A few cheering successes on his way were more than obliterated by the fall of Bristol in the beginning of September, after a brief siege of three weeks, and the consequent disgrace and dismissal of Prince Rupert, a leader who had been for so long the hope and supporter of his cause. Charles had now few upon whom he could depend. He treated with the Scotch ; he essayed a treaty with his Parliament ; but his efforts were in vain ; and, one by one, he saw his last hopes die out, his towns and cities lower their flags, his bravest and truest friends submitting to or imprisoned by the Parliament, his army dwindling by degrees, his ammunition slowly but surely exhausted.

At Newark, whither he again repaired, new complications and distresses awaited him. The surrender of his towns had filled his garrisons with officers and men loth to leave his standard, yet unable to perform the tasks allotted them in the face of the superior forces of the Parliament. Jealousy and suspicion were rife amongst them; and in the midst of the general danger and discomfort Rupert came to Newark, and in defiance of strict commands presented himself before his deeply-offended sovereign. He came, he said, to clear his character of the stain that had been cast upon it, less by the loss of Bristol than by the subsequent harsh judgment of the King; and submitting himself to a court-martial, was by it acquitted of all and every charge save the single one of *indiscretion*. Perhaps it had been better if Charles had then extended a full and free forgiveness to one who had often risked his life for him, and who had done his best, at least, to serve him; but though the sentence was sufficiently lenient and the general verdict satisfactory, the King not only refused to reinstate him in his former position in the army, but treated him with a coldness so galling as to rouse the violent passions of the Prince, and make a further breach between them. It was not for many months that Rupert's haughtiness and pride were finally overcome by his affection, and his complete submission linked again the old ties of kinsmanship and loyalty. He then returned once more to Oxford to strike another blow for the cause which was so dear to him, and the country in which he was to live and die.

Meanwhile Ernest and his cousin, Edward Leighton, had adhered strictly to the fortunes of the King; following him in his marches, and joining first in the taking of Huntingdon, and later in the few skirmishes that took place outside the gates of Oxford. It was during the autumn of this year that Ernest met with an adventure which, little as he then believed it, was to exercise an important influence over his after-life. He was returning to the city one afternoon, after a short absence, and the extreme beauty of the country, in its September colouring, had tempted him away from the public road into a wilder if more secluded path. The main body of the foe were still far



distant, and his sword and a pair of pistols offered him sufficient protection against any stragglers of the opposite party whom fate might bring across his path. On the other hand, his thoughts were wont to afford him pleasant company ; proving indeed, at times, almost too engrossing for one in his hazardous position. On the present occasion they roamed freely and unchecked over the varied and eventful changes of the last few months : now with tender yearning to the friends of his youth, now in memories sad or triumphant, of late defeat or victory ; and now, calling fancy to their aid, launched into brilliant visions of a future, in which right should triumph and all wrongs should be forgiven.

At length he raised his eyes. He had wandered further than he had intended—further than was altogether prudent, even in the neighbourhood of the Royalist town of Oxford, in these days of strife and battle ; and the green slopes and lofty trees, with the thin blue smoke curling over a foreground of luxuriant evergreens, intimated his approach to some gentleman's demesne—a foeman's possibly. But it was too late to recede, even if he had thought fit to do so. His eye lingered for a moment on the bright garden, where autumn flowers still bloomed abundantly, and where varied handsome shrubs climbed the banks and nestled in the shelter of the wood ; whilst almost at his feet a miniature lake mirrored back the blue sky, with the white clouds drifting across it. So fair was the scene that he paused awhile to gaze upon it, oblivious for the moment of the dangers that might surround him. His eye wandered slowly over the valley, as though he would trace the little winding road along which his route lay, and which wound along through pleasant fields or amid fertile elevations, in and among the bushes, and perilously visible from the mansion. There lay the road to Oxford, and the afternoon was wearing to a close, a storm brewing in the distance. Hastily rousing himself from his abstraction, he was about to resume his walk, when a cry, low, wild, and thrilling, rose upon the air, and caused him to turn hurriedly towards the water. Down the steep slippery bank a child was running—if so her unwilling progress could

be styled—as, utterly incapable of staying her steps, she flew down the declivity, and fell into the lake below.

Another instant and the young Cavalier was on the spot. Throwing off his heavy mantle, he plunged fearlessly into the water, and strove to reach the child, whilst the horrified mother, uttering shriek after shriek, looked on without the possibility of rendering assistance. A small stream running into the lake formed a strong current, into which the child was borne, and it was not until some few minutes had elapsed that Ernest succeeded in reaching her, and bearing her to land. Wrapping his mantle round her, and raising her in his arms, our hero mounted the ascent, and placed her, dripping and unconscious, in the arms of her mother, who clasped her to her heart with a mute expression of gratitude, more pleasing to the young Cavalier than words. It needed but a glance to tell him that the lady before him was a Puritan ; but not until the child was in a fair way to recovery would his gallantry or his kind heart permit him to retire. The lady, too rapt in her restored child to notice much the appearance of the young man before her, having satisfied her gratitude for the present—first by that mute glance, then by brief broken words of thanksgiving—took no further notice of him, but throwing back the cloak that hid her darling from her, she uncovered a face, pale and lily-like in its stillness, but faultless in features and expression. Small, slight, and fragile, Ernest had believed her younger than she really was, had not the grave pensive cast of feature (melancholy in one so young, and rendered still less childlike by its perfect immobility) caused him to contrast her with his one-year older Alice.

Raising his cloak from the ground, and throwing it over his shoulders, and satisfying himself that that faint colour denoted returning life, he stepped forward to bid farewell ; but another had witnessed the danger of the child, and as Ernest turned to go a tall stern-looking officer stood before him. He was well dressed, in the Parliamentary uniform, and his air of command proclaimed him as one high in office and in rank. The eager exclamation of the lady, his evident anxiety as he bent over

the child, proclaimed his relation to them both. By a hasty gesture he stayed the departure of Ernest; and after the first moment of warmth and feeling, called forth by the condition of his child, he resumed his proud and somewhat dictatorial manner as he turned towards our hero and gazed fixedly upon him. Ernest returned the look with a kind of haughty respect; for, whatever might be the Puritan's opinion of *him*, the Royalist's quick glance discovered much that was favourable in the grave features before him. The face was stern and cold, but the eye was not wanting in expression, nor the smile, though a faint one, in gratitude. The furrows on his brow and his gray hair recalled to him his father, and awakened a respect seldom felt or shown by the Cavaliers towards those of the opposite party. In the mean time—and the scene lasted but a moment—the Puritan's glance was fixed upon the preserver of his child.

Though, thanks to the thick dark mantle, the Royalist attire was unseen at present, it had not passed unnoticed by the Roundhead, as from the summit of a neighbouring height he had watched the bold plunge into the lake. And were it not so, the waving hair, the delicate features, and refined manner of the young soldier, would in those troubled times have caused grave suspicion; and it was a thoughtful and piercing glance that now brought the colour into Ernest's cheek, as he stood before the stranger. What would have passed, or who would first have spoken, cannot now be conjectured, as the child, waking from her swoon, gazed anxiously from her mother to her father and Ernest. Her mind realised in an instant what had happened, and coming—although in a less time—to the same conclusion that her parents had already arrived at, and knowing the peril with which her preserver was surrounded, and the hatred with which the Royalists were regarded by her party, she sprang forward with eager imploring accents:

‘O father, he cannot be so bad—he saved *me*!’

‘My darling Esther!’ cried the Roundhead fondly. ‘Peace, child; this is no place for thee.’ Then turning to Ernest—  
‘And deem me not, young sir, so wanting in gratitude and honour as willingly to injure one who has just restored to ~~me~~

my child, even'—he added in a lower tone—'though by profession he is our foe. Is there any way in which I can serve you ?'

'I thank you,' replied Ernest ; 'but the pleasure of saving life ever repays any peril it may incur—or, at least, it ought to do so.'

'And you will accept no aid from one of our party, I presume,' returned the Roundhead. 'Be it as you will then, for in good truth I know not how to aid you.'

'His path is beset with dangers, and the righteous are scattered abroad,' said the lady, in a low voice.

'Thou sayest right, good wife,' replied her husband. 'Thou canst scarcely refuse to enter our house, young sir, and replace thy dripping vesture. Neither needest thou refuse a passport as far as I can serve thee. 'Twill injure neither thy cause nor mine.'

'I know not that, sir,' said the young man, with a frank smile. 'My arm has already been raised against your party, and even now, though I would myself accept your kindness, I know not how far, were my mission known to you, justice to your cause would permit you to assist me.'

The Roundhead started, and for a while remained rapt in grave reflections ; they were broken by his wife :

'But not knowing them, Philip, thou canst aid him an thou desirest.'

'I will, then,' said the Roundhead. 'My little Esther, away with thee to thy chamber ; and you, young sir, may it please you to follow us.'

Ernest bowed, and his host led the way to the house ; whilst his lady, though with slower steps, followed her daughter, who, with a ringing laugh and a step more befitting a young fawn than a Puritan damsel of those days, flew also in that direction. When she reached the door, however, her excitement seemed suddenly to subside, and her face had resumed its usual sweet serenity as she turned towards her father and his guest, bade them adieu with a profound curtsy, and retired into her own apartment.

'And now,' said his host, as Ernest, having partaken of

some refreshment, and donned a suit more fitted for his journey than that which he had laid aside, again entered the parlour,—‘and now, young man, I will bid you stay no longer, for the sun is on the decline, and the hour waxeth late. Are you far from your destination? But it is best not to ask,’ and he went with him to the door. ‘I have already discovered that you are a Royalist, sir, yet have proved my wish to serve you,’ he added presently; ‘I should be glad, therefore, to know your true name and rank. My own is at your service: I am General Norreys.’

‘And I,’ replied Ernest, ‘am Captain Heyward of Edgeleigh; a relative of Sir Thomas Middleton.’

‘Middleton! why, he is one of *us*! I know him *well*,’ replied Norreys, somewhat surprised. ‘I have often heard of you, Captain Heyward, and am pleased to have seen one of whom Fame speaks highly. You have another relation on our side, I think?’

‘A brother,’ said Ernest, whilst a slight shade of pain crossed his features.

‘I have met him more than once,’ said Norreys. ‘Could I ever serve you or him, for your sake rest assured it shall be done. Esther will not forget her debt, though to her father or betrothed be left its payment. Farewell. I do not love your cause, neither do I approve it. But I do love the courage and kindness which you have evinced; and if at any time I have the happiness to be of use to you, I shall thank God for it. And should the fortune or the fate of war prevent it—should I die before the debt be cancelled—the prayers of a widowed mother will never be wanting for the preserver of her child. Farewell once more.’

‘Farewell,’ replied Ernest, his tones full of emotion as he marked the gratitude of the father. ‘Farewell, and thanks for your good wishes.’ Then as his host held out his hand he grasped it warmly, and Royalist and Roundhead stood, personally at least, in peace together. Norreys turned away, and Ernest thoughtfully pursued his path towards Oxford.

## CHAPTER V.

‘He said, with emotion, “Forgive me;  
I have been angry and hurt; too long have I cherish’d the feeling.  
I have been cruel and hard; but now, thank God, it is ended.”’

LONGFELLOW.

THE spring brought the excitement of a renewal of hostilities. The Parliamentary forces advanced slowly towards Oxford with the intention of invading it. The Scottish army, under Leslie and Cassilis, crossed the Border, and a few skirmishes took place to the satisfaction of the Royalists, who began to congratulate themselves on having something to do again after a long idle winter. Prince Rupert was with them, and his presence made them hopeful.

But in the beginning of May all this was altered by the surrender of the King to the Scots; and soon after, by his Majesty’s commands, Rupert made honourable terms for himself and followers, and delivered up Oxford to the Parliament. He then went abroad and the Royalists dispersed; only a few still persevered, too loyal or too sanguine to throw down their arms so easily. Ernest went to Ragland Castle to assist the noble old Marquis of Worcester in his obstinate and valorous defence. Others, including Major Leighton and Colonel Seymour, proceeded to the Isle of Man. For some months after Ragland fell, and the English fortresses had been taken and dismantled, the little island kingdom of the Earls of Derby held its own against the enemies of the King. The Royalists had bound up their last hopes there; and even when the royal commands were laid upon them to submit, Derby, like Worcester before him, felt justified in disobedience to one who was a prisoner under the control of his foes, and disregarded an injunction which seemed to them so contrary to his advantage.

But Charles had other hopes and other schemes of which his followers knew little. Whilst the last blow was being struck and the last hope dying out, and his enemies were still full of wonder at the suddenness of his surrender, he was waited upon at Newcastle by his kinsman and former favourite, the

Duke of Hamilton, whom the Parliament had just released from Pendennis, and who now, with many other Scottish noblemen, presented himself before him to assure him of his sympathy, to concert with him upon his affairs, and to lay before him propositions of peace. The meeting must have been a strange one. The King was at once a monarch and a captive, with free will to treat, but with little personal liberty. Of the hundred nobles who presented themselves before their sovereign, by far the greater number had rebelled against him. They had not submitted to him, but, so to speak, he to them. Hamilton himself had been his friend no less than kinsman; had been his favourite since his early youth; had swayed and influenced him more than any other of his courtiers; had been loaded by him with honours and benefits; and yet, finally, at the instigation of his known foes, had been arrested and imprisoned without a hearing. It was not to the King that he even now owed his release; and yet, generously forgetful of late injuries, mindful only of former favours, he waited upon him in his misfortunes and offered him his assistance and support. Hamilton has been deeply blamed by historians. He has been accused of insincerity to Charles, of a too great attachment to his own interests and fortunes. Some have said that he was disloyal. For ourselves we cannot think so. His schemes were indeed unfortunate; he was preferred to posts for which he had no natural genius; he was associated with men who were his foes and strove against him; but he was brave and generous and dauntless in the field, and, striving vainly for his master's cause, for the same master he would one day lay his head upon the block, in silent testimony that his foes had wronged him when they called him interested and disloyal. And now the meeting was a strange one. The Duke approached with some little emotion and kissed the King's hand, in token of affection and respect. Then, say the chronicles of the times, he would have retired into the background, and held no further communication with his offended sovereign. Charles, however, greeted him with joy; assured him of his continued esteem for him, his sense of his recent sufferings, and his conviction that, in

all weighty matters at least, he had been guiltless ; finally protesting that the arrest had been *wrung* from him, and that he had striven against it until the very morning when his grace's ill fortune drew him to Oxford.

After this a reconciliation was a matter of course, and, as the propositions of peace were not accepted, Hamilton took leave of the King and retired to his own estates, to remain until the assembly of the Scottish Parliament in November gave him opportunity to fulfil his promise to the King and mediate between him and his people. A general lull had now fallen over the country. Charles continued with the Scots at Newcastle, and though the Parliamentary troops still hung about the most suspected towns, the war was tacitly at an end.

Whilst the foregoing events were taking place, the sentiments of Master Heyward with regard to his son had gradually undergone a change. For some little time, it is true, he had continued inexorable. His son's offence was in his eyes a grievous one ; his feelings had been wounded in their tenderest part ; his favourite plans had been overthrown, and the very fame which our hero had acquired in his adopted cause seemed to Master Heyward to add new aggravation to his crime.

But the sight of his daughter's pale face and his ward's tearful countenance combined at length to soften him ; and when, one evening, both Ruth and Alice threw themselves at his feet and besought him, by the memory of his lost and well-loved wife, to receive and pardon her favourite son, he relented. Pride and anger once vanquished, affection returned with all its force, and he looked forward with eagerness to the time when the wanderer should return and be forgiven. But Ernest's return was not easy, even if he had been made aware of his father's altered feelings. Whilst at Oxford, Alice had heard from him occasionally, and had even written to him in reply, but then she had had little good to tell him ; and now that Ragland had fallen and the war was dying out, his movements were uncertain and they heard not from him. He had taken too open a part in the service of the King to have escaped the



anger of his foes; and his kinsmanship with Laneric, though fitted to advance him in the royal army, would have done him little good with Cromwell and his party. That he was waiting somewhere in retirement for the earliest opportunity to serve his King was all his kinsmen knew about him; but as the autumn passed away and winter brought a general amnesty, he found himself once more at liberty to revisit the home of his boyhood and to attempt a reconciliation with his father, and this is how it happened :

The evening was wild and stormy; the wind sighed through the bare branches of the oaks and whistled round the fir-tree tops; the snow lay like a heavy pall upon the ground, and the icicles glittered from the eaves. Snow everywhere. A cold piercing blast moaned in the chimney, but inside all was warm and cheerful. Ruth drew nearer the hearth and piled the wood yet higher, making a pleasant blaze, and moving softly about, as befitted a maiden of those times, her head and hands alike filled with domestic duties. The maid lit the candles and placed the steaming supper on the board, drove away the kitten from the cosiest corner of the hearth, and brought her master's special footstool from the adjoining room. Alice, however, moved not from the casement, where she had sat since the evening closed in, her fair face close against the glass, her large dreamy eyes gazing out into the darkness. The wide white landscape stretched unheeded before her; the dark objects that passed betimes across it were scarcely noticed; the waving branches, the clearly defined shadows and the cold frosty moon were of little interest to her. Even her uncle's entrance was unmarked. Her glance seemed ever fixed on the fast-darkening horizon.

'Thou wilt surely come to supper, Alice?' said her cousin at last. 'Even now it waxeth late, and the air by the window is chilly. Surely thou hast not opened the casement, maiden? Nay then, I marvel not why the fire doth not its duty.'

'Thou art silent, Alice,' added her uncle. 'Hearest thou not thy good cousin's questions? And thou art pale also, child. Seest thou aught of danger out yonder?'

'I see nothing,' she replied, smiling, 'save the white fields

and the dark hedgerows, and such thou knowest are the usual signs of winter.'

'And thou hearest naught?' said Ruth somewhat anxiously. 'It is not thy wont to sit thus lonely and silent, cousin Alice.'

'And I hear nothing,' said the girl sadly, 'save the moaning of the wind in the chimney and the pattering of the snow that even now the wind shakes from the branches.'

'And wherefore then sit idle, maiden?' said the Roundhead somewhat sternly. 'Thy cousin is ever busily engaged.'

'Nay, father,' said Ruth gently, 'I wish not for aid. Let her be at peace. Alas, sweet Alice, the cares and duties of womanhood will come to thee over soon.'

Alice made no answer, but rising, took the tray from Ruth and laid it on the table.

'Pardon, cousin Ruth,' she said presently. 'I was indeed in dreamland. I think I am under a spell to-day, and do nothing as it should be done,' she added, with a coaxing look at her uncle, who smiled and drew her to a place beside him.

'Thou art young and giddy, Alice,' he said gravely; 'and Ernest will have but a child-bride in thee. Well, he is not ready for thee yet, and age may bring discretion.'

Alice turned away with a sigh, and Ruth answered for her.

'Where is Ernest, father?'

'How can I tell?' he replied gravely. 'Maiden, thou knowest as much as I can tell thee; with Lanerik or Hertford maybe; but I know not. Would that he had never left us!'

'It is too late to think of *that*,' said Ruth sadly; 'but fear not, father, he will yet return. Hast heard from Charles lately?'

'I have, daughter. The disturbances continue in the army, and there is nothing new from Scotland, only the King's cause gets worse instead of better since Hamilton began to plead for him.'

'And Charles himself?' asked Ruth.

'And Charles has done his duty bravely, and the friendship of the noble Cromwell is his own. His efforts have been crowned with success, and his arm hath scattered the ungodly.'

Thou mayst smile, Mistress Alice, but know, had thy betrothed been true to the principles of his house, a like and even a greater glory had overshadowed him. He hath the stuff of which heroes are made, but he hath wasted it in a wrong cause. He hath thrown away his fortunes, and it was through thy counsel that he hath done so.'

Alice's face flushed crimson, but her childish voice was firm as she replied :

'I had rather see him the last among the King's armies than the first among the rebels.'

'But *he* also hath gained glory,' said Ruth mildly; 'for thou knowest, father, Charles hath told thee of his movements, and how even the Roundhead camp rang with the praises of the boy-soldier.'

'Yes, Charles at least does not condemn him for acting as he thinks right, and—'

'And I have forgiven him, Alice,' said the Roundhead kindly,—'would that he were here that I might tell him so!—therefore thou needst not to defend him. Poor Ernest! I doubt not that his mother's words have been listened to and obeyed, and I will not add to the sufferings they will cause him. Dry thy tears, Alice child. Be as true to thy betrothed as to thy cause. Ruth, thou canst clear the table, and I will replenish the fire.'

Alice drew near the window.

'Hist, Ruth !' she said.

'And wherefore "hist !" ' said her cousin. 'Heardst thou aught ?'

'The trampling of a horse's hoof ; but it has died away in the distance.'

'Well, there is nothing strange in that, so near the public road,' said Master Heyward ; then, after a pause of some minutes, 'How pale thou art, Alice child ! what seest thou ?'

'A dark shadow on the snow,' she replied ; 'it is moving ; it is past.'

Master Heyward rose and went to the window.

'Thou art dreaming, maiden. The snow is thick upon the

ground, and a horse's hoof were unheard. It is too dark to distinguish a passer-by, even should there be one. It is a wretched night, and none would be willingly out of doors. Thou mayst close the window, Ruth, and draw the curtains, or thy cousin will be frozen.'

Ruth obeyed quietly. Alice held out her hand.

'I wish thou wouldst let me look, Ruth,' she said, in a low sad tone. 'I feel so strange to-night, as though something unexpected were about to happen;' and she pressed her hand on her heart, as though to still its beating.

Ruth took her cousin's hand and drew her towards the fire.

'Thou art cold, sweet child, and frightened. What can I do for thee?'

Alice sank into a chair; then, as her ear caught again the half-smothered sound that had before attracted her attention, she started, rose, and catching her uncle's eye, sat down again, and burst into tears.

In an instant Ruth was beside her; and Master Heyward, rather alarmed at the unusual excitement of Alice, was about to call for assistance. His daughter stopped him.

'Stay, father! Something has frightened her. It is such a wild night, and the wind sighs so in the chimney. What is it, Alice?'

But Alice started up, and retired to her own room; where, opening the window, she stood gazing out into the landscape, till the growing darkness screened it entirely from her sight.

When she returned to the parlour, Ruth was quietly working; Master Heyward reading one of the old Roundhead publications of the day.

'Thou art better, Alice?' said Ruth gently, looking up with a smile of welcome as her cousin entered.

'I was not ill, Ruth.'

'You were frightened, dear Alice?'

'I was anxious,' she replied.

'For whom, dearest?'

'For Ernest,' she answered, in a low hushed voice. 'Ruth, my thoughts were with him, but wherefore I know not.'

‘Dear Alice,’ said Ruth fondly, as she twined her arm round her waist, ‘didst thou fear for him, sister?’

‘I could not,’ she replied. ‘No, he cannot but triumph.’

At this moment Master Heyward laid down his paper, and taking his candle, proposed retiring to rest. The evening prayers were concluded, the good-nights were said, when a noise was heard in the hall; voices and steps approached. The door opened hurriedly, and Ernest entered.

With clasped hands and blushing cheeks, Alice sprang forward, and Ruth held out her arms as though to give a mother’s welcome to her young brother; but Ernest heeded neither. In that one moment, upon which so much depended, his eye sought but one face, his ear listened for one voice alone; and as in speechless wonder his father glanced towards him, and opened his arms to receive him once more to his heart, and his lips moved to restore to him the affection which he had forfeited, he flung himself on one knee before him, and passionately kissing the hand in their last interview so unwillingly yielded him, he exclaimed in a low deep tone of emotion, ‘Father, forgive me!’

‘Yea, and I will forgive thee!’ exclaimed Master Heyward, as he laid his hand on the young man’s head. ‘And I will bless thee, boy—bless thee that thou hast returned unto me; for my heart hath yearned for thee, and peace had fled from my dwelling until thou art restored to us. Nay, rise,’ he added, for Ernest knelt at his feet, striving to master the emotion which well-nigh choked him. ‘I have been harsh indeed to thee, and have caused thee much to suffer; but thy mother’s spirit hath moved me, and at the voice of her pleading have I pardoned thee, my son.’

And he blessed him again as he knelt before him in the pride of his manhood and his valour. And Ruth and Alice wept with joy to see him again amongst them, and hung on his words as he told them of his camp-life, and the deeds of loyalty and heroism of which he had been the witness. But first of all they gazed upon him, and marked the changes that sorrow and anxiety had traced upon his brow; for he was changed. The

long months had left their impress upon him, and it was no longer a boy who stood before them. His smile was bright, but it was the smile of early manhood, when life has risen before the view, and the boyish enthusiasm of the past has given place to something holier and deeper. His rich attire was now concealed, and his long dark mantle gave him an older and more soldier-like appearance. His long fair hair, damp and heavy, yet hung in the same wavy locks his mother had loved so well ; but the brow which they shaded was graver than used to be.

The first greetings over, there was much to be asked and answered on both sides ; and the happy cheerful converse was prolonged far into the night. Nor, having won back the prodigal son, were they soon to lose him ; for his troop disbanded and his friends dispersed, a truce concluded between the contending armies, Ernest had to resign himself to more peaceful occupations, and consider the past as a strange but passing dream. Not that he himself believed that the truce would be a long one. The King was still at Newcastle, a prisoner rather than a guest ; and Hamilton had failed, at least so far, in his attempts at mediation. Angry discussions passed between the Scotch and English Commissioners, each of whom wished to dictate the terms of peace. The King refused assent to all their propositions, and though the Royalist leaders had submitted to the Parliament, and been admitted to the amnesty, there was a general feeling in the country that the reconciliation was but feigned, and that an outbreak might at any time be expected. As yet, however, nothing could be done, and Ernest yielded readily to his father's proposition that he should spend the time of peace amongst them. Charles was still detained ; his troops, unlike the Royalist forces, were not disbanded. Cromwell felt that he should soon have need of them. There was meanwhile much discontent and even mutiny amongst them, and an officer so trusted could be spared but seldom from his post. George Gottenberg was surly and discourteous when he first renewed acquaintance with Ernest, but believing the war at its conclusion, or at least in hopes that Ernest's share therein was

over, shortly fell again into his old ways with him, and even tried his hand at his conversion. Edward Leighton was abroad, Hertford at his country place, Laneric in Scotland, and the other Royalists were variously dispersed. In spring the surrender of Charles by the Scotch came like a shock to those who, like Ernest, had not been upon the spot, and marked the vacillating measures of the Commissioners. Still even then they did not lose hope of his final triumph and restoration ; and a period of much quiet happiness succeeded for our hero—the more prized, it may be, after the strife and struggle and anxiety that had gone before. He resumed, almost insensibly, his old pursuits: his walks with Ruth and Alice, his graceful attentions to his father, his quiet talks with Master Clifford ; and though at times he longed eagerly to rejoin his troops and make a new effort for King Charles, he readily perceived the futility of any unorganised attempt, and waited, with such patience as he might, until the summons of Laneric or Hertford should recall him to his post.

During the first few months that succeeded his arrival at Edgeleigh he on several occasions endeavoured to obtain from his father the hand of his betrothed, who was at this time just seventeen. But for some time, lenient as he was on all other points, on this Master Heyward was inexorable. The youth and childishness of Alice, and the unsettled state of the times, formed his principal objections ; and though Ernest beheld it in a different light, the advantages of a closer tie seemed questionable, whilst the avowed profession of the bridegroom might at any moment again separate him from his bride. It was in vain that Ernest argued that Alice would still remain at Edgeleigh ; that she would lose nothing of the security or of the friendship that was at present her portion ; and on his part, should Fate be cruel, should he find his death either in the battle or on the scaffold, he would still have the comfort of feeling that there was one bound to him by the tenderest ties, who could mourn his memory if dead, and share his name made glorious even by the very fate that had reft him from her. It was rather the sophistry of a lover than the reasoning of a

philosopher ; but it had its effect by degrees ; and when some fourteen months had passed away, and comparative tranquillity still reigned, Master Heyward gave a reluctant consent to the publishing of the banns in the market-place at Fairleigh ; and having once promised, with his old reverence for his word, never even offered to retract, when a complete change of affairs seemed to offer him an excuse to do so.

It was in the beginning of the year '47 that Ernest one morning sought his father, his face aglow with a variety of conflicting feelings, and an open letter in his hand. The heart of the Roundhead misgave him at the first glance ; but he rose and stretched out his hand with a hearty greeting.

'Thou hast brought me ill news, Ernest ; I see it in thy face.' Then, as his son seemed to hesitate before answering, he added, 'Nay, speak out, my son, and tell me all. Have they summoned thee to leave us ?'

'Yes, father ; Laneric has written. Father, you would not hold me back when my King hath need of me ? I have bound me to his cause. He is in danger, and I must strive for him.'

'In danger ?' said his father slowly. 'Well, it may be so ; but I would fain think otherwise. I doubt me that the Righteous (nay, even Cromwell, bold, uncompromising as he is) would lay hand upon the sovereign ; but if it should be so, my son, how couldst *thou* aid him ? And thou hast neither influence nor power to back thee.'

'It is true,' replied his son ; 'my own arm can do little, and our party hath at present little strength to boast of ; but it may not always be so. Thou knowest that, this long time past, rumours have reached us of intended risings and present discontent ; and I doubt not but that our generals will improve the occasion for the strengthening of our cause. Hamilton has already, in Scotland, the nucleus of an army ; Laneric has joined him ; and Langherne, who has lately come over to us, has collected a handful of Royalists on the borders of Wales. It is to him that I am directed to offer my services.'

'But not yet, my son ; at least not yet. Tarry a while, I pray thee, till some better occasion offer. These rumours may



be false, a delusion, a snare ; wait at least until they be confirmed. Then thy force, if I understand thee, is but a handful, that the mere name of Cromwell should suffice to scatter. Thy very way would be fraught with peril ; for the Righteous are scattered abroad, and the life of a Royalist would be but as a drop of water in their hands.'

'Even so, father. The first duty of a soldier, his first *delight*, is to obey.'

Ernest had spoken all along with such calm composure that Master Heyward was, in some measure, deceived by it, not perceiving how much of youthful ardour and enthusiasm was suppressed for fear of causing pain. He now dropped his arguments in favour of persuasion.

'I had hoped to have kept thee longer with me,' he said sadly. 'Not for *very* long, perhaps, for the times are evil, and I have feared always that thy duty would some day call thee from me ; if indeed,' he added, with a kind of yearning hope scarcely warranted by the foregoing conversation, 'thou hast not seen the folly of thy choice, or repented the infatuation that first led thee under the banner of the Stuart.'

'I trust, father,' said Ernest proudly, and in a tone which carried conviction with it, 'that I have given you no reason to think this.'

'Thou hast not, thou hast not, my son. Nay, forgive me that I for an instant doubted thee. I see that thy way is clear before thee ; and yet—and yet—my son, would that it were otherwise !'

There was a brief pause ; but the next question came calmly enough :

'Has Langherne a troop for thee ?'

'No, not at present ; the force is as yet unorganised.'

'Then why this pressing need of thee ? How art thou to aid him ? Thou mayst tell *me* all, Ernest.'

'There is not much to tell, father ; but I know that it is safe with thee. My duties will be various : to assist Langherne in the raising and forming of new recruits, to traverse the adjacent counties, to muster fresh forces or procure supplies, to establish communication between the scattered supporters of the

King, or to obtain information of the movements and number of the opposite party.'

'Well, thy duty calls thee. Alas, that I should say it; for parting will be a sad one! Heaven grant that it may not also last long! Strange that the mere word "*loyalty*" should have an influence stronger than the ties of years; that the name of "*King*" should be able to call to thee to quit, not coldly, Ernest, but in some sort glad to leave the nearest claims of friendship and of kin,—home, parents and sister; even thy betrothed.'

'It is even of this that I would speak, father, and of my promise to me.'

'Nay, surely that at least is over,' said his father hastily. 'Thou canst not mean to claim her *now* ?'

'Even so, father: I would leave her with thee; I would not take anything from her, only the guerdon of her already plighted hand. She would be with thee still, dearer perhaps as daughter than as ward; but she would be *mine* also, and such the thought of her would cheer and console through difficulty, trial, danger, that would be borne gladly for her sake, for her cause, for her King.'

'Truly methinks, Ernest, that though a maiden may glory in the perils that beset her knight, a true wife would be glad rather to detain him in the paths of peace.'

'That may be, when the war is over, father.'

'And why not wait till then?' returned Master Heyward. 'I yielded to thee lately, thinking that thou wouldst long be with us. I did not picture this speedy parting, nor did I expect either.'

'Alice knows all now, and is favourable to me,' said Ernest softly. 'She loves my cause as well as I do, and is glad that I should serve the King.'

'If thou *couldst* serve him; but I see not how this war scheme can do so. When dost thou start, Ernest, and where wilt thou join Langherne ?'

'At his country house; and I would fain start this evening or to-morrow at the latest.'

'And thou wouldst wed with Alice at so short a notice? Verily, if I rightly comprehend thee, thy proposal is neither wise nor fitting.'

'By no means; such was not my intention. But, father, be ready on my return. My absence at present is urgent, but it will not this time be a long one. Before a blow is struck, before a blade hath left its sheath, I will return to claim her. I will write to tell you of the day. Father, I pray you not to turn from my request; it may be the last that I may ask of you.'

The last words seemed to have slipped from him unawares. His father answered him hastily,

'I have promised, Ernest, and my word has been always sacred to me; and verily I can deny thee nothing, knowing not how soon I may lose thee. O that these days of trouble may soon be brought to a peaceful ending, as Heaven sees fitting!'

'Heaven grant it indeed,' said Ernest, 'for the sake of all! Meanwhile we must strive manfully. And thou wilt have all things ready when I come, father?' he added pleadingly; 'for thou knowest that my time may be but brief.'

'The banns published and the maiden willing,' answered Master Heyward. 'So far I know; but what other things may be wanting I know not, especially for those of thy faith.'

'Ruth will arrange for us, father.'

'Truly Ruth is a wise maiden, and in her hands thou wilt be safe. If we hear from thee, then, thy behests shall be accomplished. When dost thou think thou mayst return?'

'As soon as our plans are settled. It depends more on others than on myself; but I will give you fitting warning, and I trust it will be shortly. In three weeks from the present time; God permitting!' he added reverently and in an undertone.

'Well, well; despond not, my son, but hope always. And now call hither thy sister.'

'Ruth! Nay, not Alice yet,' he said, smiling, as the door opened and her bright face looked in. 'Where is Ruth?'

'Even here, good brother,' answered she from behind.

‘Prithee retire, Alice ; it beseemeth not a maiden to intrude herself unasked into the councils of her elders. In what can serve thee, father ?’ she asked, as Alice disappeared.

‘Thy brother desireth to take to himself a wife,’ said Master Heyward ; ‘and requireth Mistress Ruth to make all due arrangements, and to do the wooing.’

‘Nay, not quite that, sweet Ruth ; but as thou art mine own good sister, so wilt thou help in my necessity.’

‘Verily it shall be done, good brother. My head and hands are alike at thy disposal ; and for the wooing, if my heart speaks true, she was wooed and won some time since.’

‘Yes, yes,’ said Ernest, smiling. ‘She is almost mine already ; but things have happened which make me eager to claim her at once.’ And in a few hurried words he told his sister the substance of the news which he had just imparted to his father. It was no shock to her ; indeed, it was altogether unexpected ; for Alice had been grave and thoughtful and fragments of the truth had escaped her. Moreover, Ruth was a calm nature, little prone to either excitement or strong emotion. A few tears gathered in her eyes as she listened to her brother’s intentions, but she did not seek to combat them and having promised compliance with his wishes, shortly led him to put things in order for his departure ; for, led by Master Heyward’s advice, he was to leave them that evening, before rumours should get abroad, or Master Gottenberg return from his weekly visit to a brother minister in the vicinity.

So well founded had been the hopes of the generals, and so eagerly had the southern Royalists obeyed the summons that Ernest, when he reached the rendezvous, found a considerable force already assembled, and sufficiently importunate and aggressive to arouse the attention and jealousy of Cromwell who began to march slowly in that direction. A few weeks of excitement and expectation followed, and though hardly prepared for an immediate outbreak, it became probable that one would speedily be forced upon them ; and every day, when it brought new adherents to their banner, brought also fresh tidings of an advancing foe. Hertford joined them shortly

and Ernest attached himself to his service with several others. They had seen much of each other at Oxford, and Ernest had never lost the impression of respect and esteem which his first meeting had enkindled within him. On the other hand, his youth, courage, and enthusiasm had awakened by degrees an answering chord in the breast of the brave and gallant veteran, whose early history had not been wanting in romance. Sorrow, perplexity, and exile had made Hertford somewhat grave and reserved in manner; experience, long and bitter, had taught him to conceal the feelings that were still warm and generous as in early youth; but he grew to take an interest in a life that was but beginning, yet which seemed to him full of promise. While, however, he honoured Ernest for the sacrifices he had made, and watched his military career as he would have watched that of a son, he was neither prodigal of his praises nor sparing of his warnings. It is probable that daring deeds and headlong bravery were of less worth with him than with other men. He had served with the brilliant Rupert, and felt that the most dazzling courage had failed to insure his success; and he perhaps valued less than he need have done the impetuous valour that, with better fortune, might have ranked the Prince among the first commanders of the age. Be that as it may, his friendship, if slow to gain and cautious even when most assured, was very true, and the foundations were shortly laid for an attachment that in after years ripened into intimacy, and ended in a mutual esteem and affection that was equally honourable to both.

Colonel Seymour was also serving under Langherne; he, too, was a friend of Ernest, and near to his own age. It was at his house that our hero had passed the interval between the surrender of Ragland and his arrival at Edgeleigh. In the camp they necessarily saw less of each other; but one day, returning from some military duty, Ernest suddenly encountered the Colonel, tearing furiously along on horseback.

‘Halloa, Heyward!’ he cried; ‘what are you doing here?’

‘What are you doing, rather?’ retorted Ernest; ‘why, you nearly rode over me. Are you the bearer of a despatch?’

'Not exactly. But you see I am taming a horse for my good old friend Langherne, who is not quite so active as he used to be. I make a point of riding all the skittish young creatures I can lay hold of, thus infallibly saving some of my superiors' necks.'

'By risking your own. That is kind of you. I really should not have given you credit for it.'

'O, that is the way of the world. It is astonishing the good I do in a quiet way; but unhappily it is seldom appreciated. What an ungrateful race we are!'

'I do not know what you may mean by a *quiet* way, Seymour, but I would not give much for your prudence. Although I have, I hope, some claim to be a horseman, I should scarcely envy you your office of horse-tamer.'

And indeed Colonel Seymour seemed to have no little difficulty in managing a steed which, to all appearance, had never been under hand before.

'By the bye, what do you think of our prospects?' he said, after a short pause, during which his attention had been thoroughly engaged. 'I have been wishing to ask you this long time.'

'They are tolerable, as far as they go, though I should be still more pleased were we on our road to London. Meanwhile I should be glad to see a little more disinterested loyalty.'

'Ay, loyalty is at a premium in these days; and as for disinterestedness, it no longer exists. Nay, there *are* a few bright exceptions: your friend Hertford, for instance; and my old enemy Prince Rupert, they say, was another. The last time I heard of him he had been wounded in a skirmish and laid up in Paris; his Majesty had written to condole with him. Well, he is far enough off at present, and I hope he will remain so, though there is some talk of his being offered the command of the Admiralty.'

'His highness seems little short of a hero,' said Ernest. 'Don't you think so? His conduct at Naseby was splendid.'

'O, don't ask me, Heyward; I always look through

parti-coloured glasses, and see black or white according as people stand in my regard.'

'A candid admission, truly; but I do not think you mean it.'

'I do, indeed; but I can tell the truth too when it suits me. If you are really in earnest, Heyward, Prince Rupert is brilliant enough, but he is too much a soldier for us courtiers to agree with him. In fine, we could not endure him; and I must acknowledge that, from his joining us at Nottingham to his surrender at Oxford, I most cordially hated him. You, being a soldier born, would have adored him, and then I should have hated you.'

'Thank you for telling me so,' said Ernest, with a smile; 'but I regret having had so little occasion to put you to the test. Even at Oxford I scarcely came across him.'

'It is not likely that you will have another opportunity just yet, so we will be friends till you do. You have heard of old Middleton's submission? I find from Hamilton's despatches he has joined the engagement already.'

'So I have heard,' replied Ernest. 'I am likely, I believe, to have an appointment on his staff.'

'You don't say so? Well, you are lucky, and I congratulate you on your promotion. I'll come to your quarters and see how you get on,' he added, with a peculiar smile. 'I'm rather fond of old Sir Thomas, but he has a temper beyond conception. Do you know him?'

'I have seen him. I cannot say I know him; but, to tell you the truth, I observed nothing extraordinary. A little warmth now and then does rather good than harm.'

'O, only that!' retorted Seymour, and a smile of amusement crossed his lips. 'I see, you do not know him.'

'Well, perhaps not; not, at least, as I should do. We have been kept much apart; but he is nearly of kin to me; his father and my grandmother were brother and sister.'

'Indeed! you surprise me; but facts are facts, notwithstanding, and as I have the greatest respect for him, you must not mind my alluding to his one little failing. It is quite as well.

that you should be prepared ; and if any knows him,' he added, with a laugh, 'I ought to do, for I have met him often before the war, and have tested his temper, to my very great pleasure and the general edification. I always say my say to him, be the consequences what they will. But I am anxious to see him as a Royalist.'

Ernest again looked his surprise. He wondered if his comrade was correct in his statement, and if he himself should win the favour of his kinsman.

'There is a good deal of discord in an army like this,' said Seymour, after a pause. 'Such jealousy, such envy, such fighting for distinction. I'm an easy-tempered man, and do my best to be peaceable, but it is utterly impossible. I have fought several duels, and made enemies for life ; and after all my exertions my friends are ungrateful, and tell me I have done them no good. "When Seymour interferes," they say, "his friends go to the wall."' '

'If they said so of me, I should leave them to themselves,' said Ernest quickly.

'I am accustomed to be misunderstood,' said the Colonel, with an air of quaint resignation. 'I act upon the best of motives, and—Fortune fails me. Besides, Middleton never listens to reason. It is surprising the quantity of advice I have squandered.'

'In pity to yourself, you should hoard the remainder.'

'I could not think of leaving my friends in the lurch,' said the Colonel, with dignity. 'Besides, I cannot resist the enjoyment of bestowing some advice on so obstinate and self-willed an old gentleman as Middleton. He is a very good general notwithstanding, I daresay, and at least has had plenty of experience. Then the discipline is so good in the army that he comes from ; he will be a martinet, I promise you.'

'Have you heard lately of his Majesty?' asked Ernest, after watching with much interest another series of evolutions on the part of the steed.

'He has been lately in London, where he received another deputation. Old Leslie, the Covenanting general, was amongst



them, with many another. Nay, some say there were a hundred at least, and they went on their knees to his Majesty that he would accept their propositions, but he would not.'

'Leslie ! That is the Earl of Leven, is it not ?' said Ernest ; 'or is it the other one ?'

'Leven ; the same to whom the King surrendered, under the impression that he was his friend,' said Seymour bitterly ; 'the same who knelt to him in submission and acknowledged him for his sovereign, yet, when his Majesty would have taken the command of his forces, replied that he was the oldest soldier, and that that office should be left to him.'

'I fear me,' replied Ernest sadly, 'that his Majesty acted not wisely in trusting himself to their professions, slender though were his own means of defence. We were few in number, but we could at least have died for him.'

'Well, what is past is past,' returned Seymour, 'and I must be going ; besides, it does not exactly suit me to have you standing beside me, as if I were a general giving orders and you my faithful lieutenant.'

'O, don't trouble yourself on that account,' said Ernest, laughing ; 'but I daresay you are in a hurry, and if you are not your horse is.'

'Then my horse must await my convenience,' said Seymour coolly, at the same time giving a violent twitch to his rein.

'Take care !' cried Ernest ; but the warning came too late, for even as he spoke the horse, with a sudden plunge forward, threw his rider fairly over his head.

Seymour rose, both disconcerted and angry ; but when Ernest ventured an inquiry if he were hurt, he replied, with a laugh,

'I am none the worse, thank you ; no bones broken, at least ; and a soldier doesn't think much, you know, of a tumble among friends. For the rest, it will never do to be beaten by one's horse ; so here goes.' And with a vault, the agility of which was reassuring, he regained his saddle and rode briskly off.

Ernest looked after him an instant, and then, with a shrug of his shoulders, resumed his walk.

## CHAPTER VI.

‘But who could have expected this,  
When we two drew together first?’ BROWNING.

It was already evening. Master Clifford was sitting in his little parlour, his Breviary in his hands, when a light tap at the door attracted his attention. The next moment a young man entered, his face and person so shrouded and concealed by his heavy riding-cloak and broad-brimmed hat, that the priest did not at first recognise him. He was not long in doubt. The new-comer, having divested himself of his mufflers, came hastily into the light, bent his knee before him, and rising, flung himself into his arms.

‘My dear Ernest, you are early indeed. I did not expect you for hours; nevertheless, I am rejoiced to see you. Alice and Mistress Ruth have been here, but are gone again. What can I do for you?’

‘I came for advice, my kind friend,’ replied the young Cavalier, with a shade of sadness on his brow,—‘to you, the guide of my childhood, the director of my youth; and I as nay, I implore, you to assist me.’

‘My counsels and my aid are yours, my son; at least in far as I can give them to you. But wherefore so grave, Ernest, on so joyful an occasion? I would fain see something of the gladness that was yours only two years ago.’

‘Yes, father,’ replied the young Cavalier; ‘but two years have changed me from youth to manhood; and even thou, my heart be less glad than heretofore, I know that Heaven has been merciful to me, and amid its choicest blessings I may name my Alice; if indeed one so fair and guileless can consent to join her fate with mine.’

‘And why such gloomy thoughts, my son, even on the eve of thy wedding-day? Dost thou doubt the faith of her whom thou hast chosen for thy bride, my son? This is not well, nor doth Alice deserve it of thee.’

‘Nay, hear me, father,’ he began.

‘Well, my son, what dost thou ask of me?’

‘The ministry of a priest and the sympathy of a friend,’ replied Ernest, as he took the old man’s hand in his.

‘Thou hast both most willingly; I long to comfort thee, if’—and he smiled cheerfully—‘if thou *will* be comforted. But first draw near the fire, for it is a chilly night, and thou hast had a long cold ride.’

And then Ernest told him of the prophecy of the seer, of the shadow it had cast upon him, of the dark future it seemed to foretell, and asked him how he should regard it.

‘In what manner does it influence you, my son?’ said Father Clifford, after a few moments of deep and grave reflection.

‘I do not fear it,’ replied Ernest; ‘but I feel its shadow over me. I think less of earthly glory and of earthly fame; I care less for the praise of men; the path of ambition has been closed to me by its spell. It has upheld me in commendation; it has supported me through many trials; and when in doubt and in difficulty, its warning has come before me, and I have obeyed it. And,’ he added, after a pause, ‘be my doom what it may, I accept it from the hands of an inscrutable Providence, and would not wish it to be otherwise.’

‘Then, my son,’ said Father Clifford, much moved by the last few words, ‘it seems to me that this presentiment, like all God’s gifts, has been mercifully sent. But I will not bid you give up Alice,’ he added, smiling, as he read the young man’s question in his eyes. ‘I think she would rather “dree her weird” with you than without you. Have you mentioned this to her?’

‘No, father, I have not yet done so.’

‘Then do not, my son; it can do no good to that young heart to cloud it with untimely, and perhaps unnecessary, sorrow. Let it rest a secret between your heart and God.’

‘I will do so, father; and thanks for your advice and sympathy. My poor little Alice, I am glad to spare her. She has already too much to fear.’

‘Are you alone, Ernest?’

'Edward Leighton is in the village; he will join me here. We have been constantly together, but I fear now we are now about to part. We have examined into our reserve in the South, and find them strangely wanting. But Langdale and Lord Musgrave press Hamilton overmuch to join them. Tomorrow I rejoin the army, and Edward will seek Lord Holland to communicate the progress we have made. Prince Maurice has taken Pomfret Castle, and will join the Duke on his entrance into England. As for Cromwell, they say that he is at present very near us; but I hope the rumour will prove incorrect.'

'I fear not; he has been steadily advancing for some time.'

'Well, it would be better for us if he delayed his coming for at least a space longer; but we must hope for the best,' said Ernest presently. Then rising, 'But I mind me, father, that the time passes; Edward should soon be here; and meanwhile thou knowest I have yet another duty to perform.'

'It is well, my son; I am at thy service,' said Master Clifford; and rising also, he passed his arm through that of the young Royalist, and led him to the chapel.

Reader, we will leave Ernest at the feet of his spiritual guide, and cast a glance upon a different but important scene.

General Cromwell was seated in his tent, with some of his officers round him, conversing on military affairs and commenting upon recently received despatches. His companions were mostly Independents; for although, true to his usual policy, he spoke fairly and seemed friendly to all who crowded beneath his standard, whatever might be their religious creed or denomination, yet it was principally to the above-mentioned sect that he gave his confidence and esteem. He tolerated the Anglicans, spoke with enthusiasm with fanatics, affected austerity with the Presbyterians, and laughed at both with the Deists. But to the Independents alone did he unveil the secrets of his fertile mind. As to the Catholics, by the testimony of one of his own party, there was never one in his army from the beginning of the rebellion to the end. They all stood by their King.

This evening the officers who gathered round their leader

were of many different sects. Each had met with a favourable reception ; each had retired pleased and satisfied from his presence ; and as each took his departure, and was in turn succeeded by another, the versatile mind of the General shone forth in some new phase of character.

Charles Heyward at last presented himself, and his presence terminated the more private conversation ; for, favourite though he might be, he was as yet too much imbued with the Puritan spirit to be admitted into the confidential intercourse of his commander. After a few greetings had been exchanged between him and the officers present, he drew aside and entered into conversation with General Norreys, who had lately succeeded in making his acquaintance, and who continued to load him with marks of kindness, hoping thereby to repay in part his obligations to Ernest. Suddenly steps were heard approaching the tent, and, after a brief parley with the sentinel, the curtain was hastily drawn aside, and the Puritan Obadiah entered the tent, and with a slight reverence abruptly addressed the General.

This man, with whom our readers are already slightly acquainted, was an old follower of the Heyward family, and had been, from the commencement of Charles's camp life, his favourite and constant attendant. He was a strong, reckless, active, hard-working, and hard-featured soldier, with no inconsiderable amount of bravery ; and for the first few years his master had been well satisfied with his services. But a short time after this story commenced, and indeed almost directly after Ernest's adoption of the Royal cause, this feeling changed, and grave suspicions rose in Charles's mind. The look of proud but true affection that had hitherto softened the stern hard features of his follower had changed, and given place to a dark sinister expression of mixed defiance and hatred ; and as Charles marked him day by day, he seemed to shrink from the presence and scarce dare to meet the eye of the master for whom but a few months before he had professed himself ready to shed his blood.

Day after day wore on, and darker and darker grew the soldier's brow ; gloomier and yet gloomier the suspicion in his

master's heart. Now and then a few hasty words, falling he unconsciously from the lips of Obadiah, had seemed to give t[he] clue to the alteration by revealing some contemplated revenge on a person unknown. Charles's anxious heart had pointed o[ut] his brother as the victim. He still retained Obadiah in h[is] service, but it was in order to detect sooner the first sign o[f] treachery or ill-will; and he scanned every movement, weighed every action, searched every word, as though to discover in each some fresh machinations against his devoted brother. An Charles was right. From the time that Ernest had gone forth from his father's home to risk life, friends, and fortune in the cause of his King—from the time that, concealed in the thick branches, in the tall fern, he had overheard the threats of his foes—from the time when the first tidings of his choice were rumoured amongst the followers of Cromwell—the hatred—the deep, dark, vindictive hatred—of the ruthless Obadiah had been his portion. The Puritan had been long a dependent of the house of Heyward; his feelings, good and bad, had their source in its precincts; his honour was one with their honour, his cause with their cause; no crime was too revolting, no deed too fierce, but at the voice of his master he would have stooped to practise it; but when that voice spoke for good, then, with clouded brow and sullen spirit, the Puritan still fulfilled his mandate, and even revenge might for a while perhaps have stayed its hand. But Charles Heyward, young in years, and looking to another point for guidance and for direction, knew naught of the deep hereditary submission of his follower, and feared by interference still farther to provoke the flame, and perchance, by revealing his knowledge of the plot, to put himself out of the power to prevent its execution. And so, unaided though uncontrolled, unabettled though it seemed unheeded, the soldier plotted and planned on day after day his dark design without a single virtue or a single softness in his heart to arrest him in his course, and knew not nor recked of the watchful eye that was ever fixed upon him. His plans he now believed matured, the day of his vengeance seemed at hand, and he spoke.

'May it please your Excellency,' said he, addressing the General, 'to give me one moment's attention?'

Cromwell looked at him for a moment, and then said, 'What is thy business, friend?'

'I have received information,' said the soldier gloomily, 'which methinks may concern the welfare of your Excellency's cause.'

'In what manner?' demanded the General.

'In this,' answered Obadiah, 'that one of the bravest and most valued officers of the man Charles Stuart is at this moment alone and unattended, save by one comrade only, at no great distance from this place, and can at any time be placed in your hands.'

'And wherefore have ye not sent to detain him?' cried the General angrily. 'Know ye not that even now he may have taken his departure? Up and after him, I say; and let not the time which may be so valuable speed from thee in vain discourse. Hearst thou, man?'

'Yes, I do hear,' said the Puritan sullenly; 'and verily, and with a light heart, I will obey. I came but to demand a troop for the better securing of the prisoner when taken.'

'A troop for the capture of a single man! Out upon thee, thou faint-hearted! Art thou a follower of thy holy cause, and dost fear to enter hand to hand against a Malignant and a Philistine? Shame on thy cowardice!'

'Nay, your Excellency,' said Charles Heyward, as he stepped hastily forward. He had marked the gleam in the man's eye, and his heart divined the name of the imprudent Cavalier. Besides, was it not his brother's wedding-night, and had not the marriage bans been published three several times at the market-place at Fairleigh? 'The man means *well*,' he added, with a bitter emphasis upon the word. 'An thou wilt permit me, I will myself head a troop for this service.'

'He will be gone ere thy troop be ready, Major Heyward,' said the General angrily. 'Saw ye ever such cowards, that they need a troop for the capture of a single man?'

'Nay,' said Charles, '*not of a single man*; for we know not \

but what many may be lurking in the neighbourhood. What is this Malignant, and what doth he in these parts ?

'In Master Clifford's house at Fairleigh,' said the soldier with his gloomy smile. 'And he cometh to celebrate his marriage with his betrothed ; but I warrant me, doth he fall into the hands of the godly, he will sooner mate with death.'

A murmur passed through the group—a murmur perchance of pity—for the doomed Royalist ; but none knew his name. None who saw the apparent haste with which Major Heyward at a sign from the General, left the tent to prepare for his expedition, could have guessed his relationship with the object of his search. Obadiah himself knew not that his dark design had been frustrated, his secret discovered ; and he watched the exit of his master with a fierce and dreadful joy that yet another pang would be the portion of Ernest in beholding himself the captive of his brother ; but Obadiah knew not his master, neither knew he the deep untiring faithfulness of a brother's love.

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## CHAPTER VII.

'A young meek bride, on whom fair Fortune smiled.'

It was late at night ; a small party were gathered round the fire in the parlour at Edgeleigh. Master Heyward looked perplexed and anxious ; he was thinking of his two sons and the perilous position. He thought how they had played together in their childhood, and how an unkind word or action had never broken the peace between them. And now, where were they and how were their paths divided ! Both young and valiant both courted, talented, and noble ; but in all else how different ! Different in religion, different in opinions, different in part liable at all times to be called upon to fight hand to hand against each other. Many fathers in these times had sons on either side ; many had even willed it so, that, win who might, they should have friends amongst the conquerors. But no self-motive was in Master Heyward's mind, and deeply, earnest



he regretted the difference between his children. He thought of Alice as she first came among them, and Charles's eager greeting to the betrothed of his brother; and now that brother was coming at dead of night to claim her as his bride, and he who had then greeted her as his sister was perchance at this very moment fighting for life or death on a distant battle-field. He thought of his own marriage with his long-lost, long-loved Edith; he remembered the bright spring morning that ushered in that eventful day; he remembered the gay voices and glad greetings of the assembled guests; he saw again his fair gentle bride, and sighed as he thought of his son—of his own brave Ernest—the last and dearest of his children, coming in danger and in secret to claim his Alice. Then as he looked upon the Royalist maiden, as she stood in the firelight in her rich white dress and flowing veil, half concealing the fair sweet face and raven tresses, he sighed to think of the sorrows that might fall on her young head, and perchance change her bridal robes for the weeds of the mourner.

Ruth too seemed anxious as she flitted to and fro, her trim little figure arrayed in its Sunday attire; but her father spoke, and she stood still and folded her hands demurely, as she listened to the fifty-times repeated question,

'Is that Ruth?'

'It is I, father.'

'Hast prepared all things, good daughter? for the time cometh, and we must be ready.'

'Yea, father, an it pleaseth thee, I have done all things necessary.'

'And the letter to Master Clifford, good Ruth?'

'With mine own hands have I delivered it unto him.'

'And he will have all ready, thinkest thou?'

'To the moment,' answered Ruth. 'Hark! I hear a horse's hoof. 'Tis Ernest.'

'Then haste thee to meet him, daughter, and bid him enter quickly, for my heart pineth to see him.'

'He'll not need the telling, I warrant me, father!' said Ruth, smiling; 'but I will go, an thou biddest me.'

‘Nay, nay, good daughter, even now I hear him, and—’

‘Mine own dear brother !’ cried Ruth, springing forward, ‘Ernest entered the room. ‘Thank Heaven, thou art safe !’

Edward Leighton entered with his cousin, but in the first joyous welcome was unperceived. As he now came forward Master Heyward’s brow clouded ; but Ruth held out her hand and welcomed him to his sister’s wedding. A slight, almost imperceptible blush tinged her fair cheek as she did so ; perhaps she was thinking of that memorable visit to her house, which in her mind, had given the first colouring to her brother’s destiny.

‘Edward Leighton,’ exclaimed the Puritan at length, ‘a the brother of one who is dear as my own child to me, I would fain be able to extend to thee a welcome proportioned to the kinsmanship between us. Had thy cause been different I should have met thee as my nephew ; as it is, I welcome thee as the guest of Ernest.’

Edward had not expected an affectionate reception ; his love for Ernest and for Alice had alone drawn him thither. He courteously apologised for his intrusion, if such it was, but asked grace for that one evening, in requital for the warm friendship that had brought him there, and the joyous event that they were about to celebrate together.

Master Heyward assented. He was about to approve by his presence the marriage of a Royalist maiden ; he would tolerate also the presence of her brother. Yet that the stern Puritan who had so angrily banished his son from his home and here not three years before, should now act so different a part, seemed strange even to himself. But he was not the only one in the times who had learned to regret the violence of their party : at times who had learned to regret the violence of their party : at times even having changed sides altogether. Still Edward Leighton was personally distasteful to him, not only because of the opinion he possessed, but because he had persuaded Ernest into sharing them. He turned away as his nephew finished speaking, and addressed himself to Ernest :

‘And how art thou, my son ? and is the country quiet ?’

'No; they say that Cromwell is not far from here, and that there are several troops abroad. Is Alice ready, Ruth? It is nearly time for us to start.'

'She is, I fear me, at the mirror,' said his sister, smiling. 'I will call her, and tell her you are here.'

But Alice had already heard his voice; in another moment she was with them, and a meeting full of gladness and affection ensued. And yet, as he gazed upon her bright beauty, and marked her childlike gaiety of spirits, he could scarcely restrain a sigh at the thought of what might be her portion in the lot that she so gladly courted. Meanwhile her heart was beating with hope and joy; no shade of sorrow was on her brow, and her bright girlish smile had never been brighter than now, when

'From that chamber, clothed in white,  
The bride went forth on her wedding-night.'

And night it truly was; midnight would soon be striking, and the stars that shone brightly in the sky were the tapers to light the wedding-party on their way.

'Will you come with us, father?' said Ernest, with a little hesitation, for he scarcely dared to ask it. 'Will you come and give your blessing to your children?'

Master Heyward rose.

'I am ready, my son; I will come with thee, albeit it is long since I have knelt before thy altars. Nay, thank me not; I feel that there is danger, and I fain must see it safely over,' he added, as if apologising to himself for an act that seemed to him so questionable.

Edward Leighton took Ruth's hand and led her to the door. Ernest threw a mantle over Alice, and, signing to his father to precede them, entered the secret passage which communicated with the parlour. It were best the servants should know nothing of their plans, Ruth said, and the suggestion was a wise one. To Ernest this mode of exit was familiar; but Alice trembled, she knew not why, as she passed silently along, marking the torches as they glared upon the rough walls, and leaning

more and more on the strong arm of her betrothed. At last they stopped.

'It is nothing, dearest,' whispered Ernest. 'We shall soon be there.' And even as he spoke the massive door flew open, and the chill night air blew in upon them. A man in a peasant's garb stood there, clearing the path, and pushing aside the briars and bushes which usually concealed the entrance to the passage.

'All right?' cried Master Heyward.

'All right,' responded the man, whom Alice knew by sight as a member of the little congregation. 'You've a cold night on it, Mistress Alice.'

'Thou art right there, friend,' said Master Heyward hurriedly. 'It's no night for women; but in these troubled times it behoveth us to be thankful if—'

'Ay, ay, sir,' answered the peasant; 'but we're 'most there now.'

And indeed it was but a short walk to the pretty cottage (the 'Agent's House' they called it in the neighbourhood), where a tiny room was fitted up, with some pretence of rustic decoration, to form a little oratory. Few knew Master Clifford, save as Major Leighton's agent; few even guessed his sacred calling, or knew that in this tiny chamber the Holy Sacrifice was offered; and yet, in these times of persecution, it was regarded as a very sanctuary by those who still professed the old religion of the land, and saw their altars overthrown, their churches desecrated, their priests pursued to death.

It was Alice who had brought those trailing wreaths of ivy, those few crocuses and snowdrops, that decked the temporary altar, and shone like jewels amid the moss and evergreens that canopied the wooden tabernacle; and far above (the gift of Lady Leighton) hung a picture of the school of Guido, in which the calm sweet face of the Virgin Mother, circled with glory, seemed to smile down choicest blessings on her children. The room was often desolate and bare; the altar and tabernacle would shortly be removed; but the picture had hung there from the earliest youth of Alice, and she could never recollect a time when she had not loved to pray before it.

It was with a kind of bewilderment at his unusual position that Master Heyward entered the oratory and greeted his reverend host ; but he could not help being touched by the poverty and simplicity around him, at the thought of the persecuted faith, which was yet held so dear by his children, so constantly, despite the many perils that attended it. It was nearly dark, but Ernest took the light from Master Clifford and lit the candles on the altar. Then, as each in turn was kindled, and the light glowed upward and played upon the decorations, causing the flowers to gleam brighter than before, and crowning them with a greater beauty, a feeling of tenderness and sadness stole over Master Heyward, with the thought that it was at the death-bed of his wife that he had last looked upon a crucifix or spoken to a priest. The lights were lit, the doors were locked and bolted ; the man who had led the Heywards thither was sent to watch outside ; and the Mass began. Ernest and Alice knelt in deep devotion ; Edward also. But though Ruth wished and strove to pray, it was with trembling and anxiety, with a feeling of bewilderment and awe ; whilst her father's thoughts were almost wholly occupied with memories of the past, and with anxious listening to the sounds outside, where the sentinel paced to and fro. It was not until the hand of Ruth was laid gently on his arm that he became aware that the Mass was over, and rose to give away the bride to one who was still more dear to him than she was. His tones faltered, but Ernest's did not ; and the sweet face of Alice, though very pale, was full of hope and confidence ; and then, when the solemn words were spoken and they once more knelt together in joy and thankfulness, a sharp quick rap was heard upon the casement, and all, except the bridal pair, rose hurriedly from their knees. They remained a moment longer, whilst the priest's hand was raised above them in one last fervent blessing. Then they also rose, and, after a few moments' whispered consultation, the door was cautiously unbarred and Master Heyward went out.

Master Clifford had already taken off his priestly vestments, and Alice, well accustomed to the task, was folding them and putting them aside ; whilst the trembling Ruth stood willing.

to assist, yet uncertain how to do so. Ernest and the priest hastily removed the decorations from the altar, took down the tabernacle and crucifix, and concealed the sacred vessels in the secret place appointed for that purpose. There were a few snow-drops round the tabernacle, and Ernest gathered them together and gave them, with a smile, to Alice, who kissed them and placed them in her bosom. Poor little bride! she had neither orange-flowers, nor costly laces, nor even jewels wherewith to grace her bridal; but these few spring blossoms were far dearer to her, in this, that they had bloomed upon the altar and were given to her by him she loved.

They had scarcely finished this hasty but necessary task when Master Heyward rejoined them. His face was very anxious and perplexed.

‘I know not what to think,’ he said; ‘but a man is asking for you, Ernest, nor will he tell his business to another. He is sent to the Royalist Captain Heyward, and is very pressing in his speech.’

‘I should say he was a spy,’ said the cautious Edward, ‘and that it was most unwise to trust yourself.’

‘There is risk, I doubt not,’ said his uncle; ‘but yet I know not what to counsel. He hinteth too that there is danger in delay.’

‘I will speak to him at once,’ said Ernest quickly. ‘Dear Alice, do not tremble so; I doubt not ’tis a friend.’

He left the cottage as he spoke. Master Heyward and Edward followed him to the door, and, holding themselves ready to assist him if needful, permitted him to step forth unattended into the bright clear moonlight. As he did so a man, closely muffled, advanced towards him and placed a letter in his hand.

‘That’ll do, Captain. You’re the right man and no mistake; read the letter quickly, and a poor man’s blessing be upon you, Master Ernest, and on yer bonnie bride. May she never know sorrow, puir bairn, though I fear me ’tis a vain wish in these times.’

‘Thank you,’ said Ernest warmly; but the man was already gone; and he hastily reëntered the cottage, to reassure by his

presence the anxious group assembled there. Drawing near the single taper now burning in the parlour, he then broke open the despatch, and read its contents aloud. They were as follows :

‘Thy foes have heard tidings of thy movements, and even now pursue thee. Read and fly. All is not yet lost ; and I, thy brother, will assist thee as far as it lieth in my power. I have already delayed the pursuit ; Heaven alone knoweth if I can do so much longer. Farewell, erring but dearly loved Ernest.—Thy deeply attached brother,

‘CHARLES HEYWARD.’

‘We must go, father,’ said Ernest calmly. ‘Thank Heaven that all is over, and that my Alice is now truly mine ! Edward, look to Ruth ; we will follow you. Alice, my own sweet wife, we must return.’

He drew her mantle round her as she rose, and led her out into the cold sharp air. Quickly and silently they wended their way through the trees. Not a sound was heard to mar the stillness of the morning, save a few whispered words from Ernest to his bride. His tones were calm as ever ; no doubt, no fear, was upon his lips.

Yet a faint sigh of relief escaped him as the door closed behind them, and they found themselves once again within the dark precincts of the secret passage.

A few minutes more and they were in the parlour. Edward, with a brief farewell to Ruth and Alice, left to see after the horses. Ernest pressed a kiss on the fair brow of his wife and led her to his father, and Master Heyward raised his hand and blessed them as they knelt before him, and scarcely knew which was the dearest to his heart ; when at that instant the door opened, and the thin crooked form of the pious George Gottenberg stood before them. Had a spectre suddenly appeared the bridal party would have been far less dismayed. Equally perplexed and bewildered was the minister when—having heard the tramp of horses outside, and fancying them to be highwaymen at least, he had ventured to intrude upon the privacy of the parlour—his glance encountered the well-known

features of the young Cavalier and the bridal vesture of the gentle Alice.

'Thou hast again admitted the Philistine under thy roof Master Heyward!' he exclaimed. 'And I mark me that thou hast moreover assisted at one of the festivals of the ungodly—a wedding perchance. Well, well; the sword of the righteous is unsheathed, and the vengeance of the Lord will presently descend upon ye. Ay, even now, an mine ear erreth not, do the troops of the avenger approach this dwelling.'

Alice looked at Ruth, and she at her father; both were equally perplexed and frightened by this unwelcome intruder. Clearly he must be induced to leave them, and without loss of time. Ruth stepped forward.

'Take it not ill, pious friend,' said she, in a voice which strove in vain not to tremble; 'and be not displeased if we remind you of the early hour. Verily thy presence, albeit usually well pleasing to us, hath, by the suddenness of thy visit, both startled and surprised us. Moreover, thou seest we have been watching, and are even now about to retire to our chambers being weary; therefore—'

'I go, maiden,' answered George Gottenberg,—'I go; but my heart is sad. Verily I had not thought that my zealous friend would have been drawn so soon into the snares of the enemy. Farewell, Ernest; the sword of the avenger is above thee. The enemy of the Philistine is even now at thy gate. Ye think not I will betray thee; for thy father's sake thou art safe with me. Fall indeed thou mayst, but it shall be through no deed of mine. Farewell, young mistress; tremble lest thine ungodly ways bring evil to thyself and husband. Farewell, Mistress Ruth; I may linger no longer in this dwelling.'

With these words he left them, and the tramp of horses' hoofs became yet more distinct in the distance; whilst still nearer Ernest could hear his own steed pawing the ground, and Edward calling to him to hasten.

Ruth and Alice clasped their hands in terror.

'Ernest, dear Ernest, save yourself!'

'Farewell, then, mine own wife!' said Ernest. 'One last



embrace, and then farewell. Father, you will take care of her? But that I need not ask you.' And with a passionate kiss upon the pure pale brow he placed his frail trembling child-wife in the arms of Ruth; and after a long earnest grasp of his father's hand, a fervent look to heaven, he leaped from the low window, and mounting, fled with his friend in an opposite direction from that by which their foes were advancing. The soft grass muffled the sound of their feet, a cloud had come over the moon, Nature herself seemed to favour them. Only time was required: might it be granted them!

The space seemed brief indeed to the Heyward family, when loud voices, clattering hoofs, and violent knocks at the gate bethought the arrival of the Roundhead troops; and soon the door was thrown open and Charles Heyward entered. He paused not to greet father or sister, but glancing hurriedly at the group,

'Where is he?' he exclaimed anxiously.

'Gone, half an hour since. O Charles, Charles! is he safe?'

'Yes, indeed, I trust so. Thank Heaven I have so far misled them! That wretched Obadiah! They must search the house, father. It will gain time, and will besides satisfy their zeal. Also thou wilt order refreshment to be supplied them; or stay, I will see to that myself, an thou permittest me.'

'Do what thou wilt, my son, only gain time if possible.'

Charles therefore departed to give instructions, but returned speedily.

'It will all be right now,' he said, with a look of relief that communicated itself to the rest of the circle. 'And now we may think of other things. Alice, my sister,' he said kindly, turning to the pale young bride, 'may not I also congratulate and bless thee?' He bent over and kissed her gently, and resumed: 'Six years ago I welcomed thee first to this house, as the friend, the betrothed of Ernest; but I give thee gladder welcome as his wife, and claim thee, moreover, as another sister.'

It was nearly two hours later when the soldiers, having

finished their business, retired finally from the premises, to return under their leader's guidance to the camp.

Meanwhile Ernest and Edward were hastening on their way, and rapidly increasing the distance between them and their disappointed pursuers.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

'But who could have expected this,  
When we two drew together first?' BROWNING.

It was at a late hour the following morning that, disappointed and unsuccessful, the small band of troopers under the command of Charles Heyward and his aide-de-camp Obadiah returned to their quarters.

Charles hastened at once to the tent of Cromwell, to lay before him such account of his expedition as he judged expedient and to receive his orders for the ensuing day. But Cromwell was in no placable mood. From the time that the soldiers he started on their fruitless mission he had in anticipation beheld the Royalist his captive; and his heart already exulted in the humiliation of one who, although so young, was yet a formidable partisan of his foes. The return of his men dashed his hopes to the ground, and it was with a gloomy brow and stern manner that he received his usually favoured officer.

'So,' he said, whilst a smile of bitter satire curled his lip — 'so, Major Heyward, it would seem that a single man dares to baffle a troop after all. I crave your forgiveness, gentlemen, and acknowledge myself mistaken in my opinion.'

'The Philistine had already escaped us ere we reached this spot,' replied Charles haughtily.

'Ha! did I not say that ye would lose him with your idle delay?' cried the General angrily. 'An ye had gone as I told ye, this would not have been. Where is Obadiah?' he exclaimed suddenly; 'he it was that knew of his concealment and he it is that shall suffer for our loss. Where is he, I ask of you?'

'He is here, your Excellency,' said a voice from the crowd.

'Here !' cried Cromwell angrily. 'And dost thou dare to present thyself before us after so grave an offence ?'

Obadiah advanced slowly and stood before the General, but in sullen silence.

'What hast thou to say for thyself, sirrah ?' cried Cromwell angrily.

Obadiah glanced furtively at his master, but did not answer.

'Dost thou mean to insult us by thy silence and thy obstinacy, or hast thou in truth no answer ? An thou speakest not, and instantly, I will have thee in the stocks.'

Still the soldier spoke not.

'We shall not much longer await thy convenience,' said the General, after a brief silence ; and at his sign a guard drew near.

But Obadiah was silent.

'Speak, man !' cried Charles Heyward impatiently. 'What new whim hast thou taken ? Methinks,' he added bitterly, 'thou wert yest're'en but too ready with thy important information.'

'I will speak an *thou* biddest me, Major Heyward,' said Obadiah, gloomily raising his eyes towards his master's face, and for the first time for weeks and months courting the inquiring glance that was fixed upon him. 'Do you permit me to clear myself, and,' he added, in a lower voice, 'at your own expense ?'

'I permit !' exclaimed Charles, surprised. Then, as he caught the meaning look in the man's eye, the thought that his doings had been discovered crossed his mind, and, scorning to shelter himself behind the instinctive fidelity of his dependent, he whispered hurriedly, 'Fear not to tell what thou knowest ; I can take care of myself. Nor would I accept assistance from one who has so lately conspired against my brother. Speak on, I charge thee.'

'Yea, and I will speak, then,' returned the Puritan. 'If thou wouldst, I had shielded thee, even though my life had been the forfeit ; nay, even though the very deed for which I screen thee had dashed the cup of vengeance from my lips.'

But thou refusest, and thy scorn absolves me from my allegiance and fills up the measure of my wrongs. I *will* speak, then.'

Cromwell, who had awaited with some surprise and more impatience the termination of this colloquy, now broke forth in a torrent of indignation, which having expended itself at last, he added in a cooler tone, 'Art aware, sirrah, that through thee this Malignant hath escaped us?'

'I am aware,' answered Obadiah, 'that he hath escaped; but the delay was not of my making.'

'How mean you?' cried the General angrily; and the question was repeated by many who stood around.

'I mean this, your Excellency: the troop was commanded by—another.'

'And what of that, sirrah? Wouldst thou impugn the character of thy master to save thy worthless one? Thinkest thou that I will believe thee?'

'I had rather that thou didst not,' said the man coolly. 'Yet I see not,' he added, looking Charles steadfastly in the face, as though to mark the effect of his words,—'I see not why he, who, when sent in pursuit of a rebel and a Royalist, could send him a message to save himself, could not also delay his troop until that message was received.'

Cromwell started forward.

'It is false—*false*! Thinkest thou, darrest thou, to impose upon me thus, even before the very face of thy master? Thou shalt dearly rue the hour when thou didst attempt it.'

'Stay!' cried Charles Heyward, as he advanced boldly and confronted his enraged commander. 'This man speaks truth.'

A pause ensued—a pause of astonishment on the part of the assembled officers, of suspense on that of Charles Heyward, and of suppressed passion in the General.

It was broken by Norreys.

'I think,' he began, 'that were your Excellency to inquire further into this affair you would find some palliation or excuse.

■ *Major Heyward* has hitherto shown himself brave and devoted

in our cause, and I am at a loss to understand his present extraordinary conduct, unless—'

'Stay!' cried Cromwell impatiently. 'Let Major Heyward explain himself. Now, sir, take time and consider your words; for I warn you your position is one of peril. Are you or are you not the cause and promoter of this officer's escape?'

'I am,' replied the Major, all his haughtiness aroused by the stern angry words of his General.

'Intentionally?'

'Perfectly so, your Excellency.'

'And you offered yourself to head the expedition in order that you might with greater certainty carry out your schemes in his behalf?'

'I did.'

'You acknowledge, then, having wilfully aided and abetted the escape of one who is known to be a dangerous enemy to the cause of which you profess yourself an adherent?'

'I make no professions,' replied Major Heyward, 'that I have not proved full often on the battle-field.'

'You acknowledge,' continued Cromwell, without heeding him, 'that not only did you purposely delay the troops, but sent a warning also to the Royalist with whose capture you were intrusted?'

'I did, your Excellency.'

'Then you shall take his place,' cried Cromwell, in a furious passion.

Norreys again interposed:

'I think, your Excellency, there must be some weighty reason for this unusual conduct. Will you permit me to investigate it?'

'You may,' said Cromwell sternly; 'but as his defence end not better than it hath begun, his head is in jeopardy.'

The words sent a thrill through the assembly, for many of them were friends of Charles. And one who had been known to shoot a man with his own hands for a moment's hesitation\* might not be over-merciful to a deliberate offender.

\* A fact.

Norreys, however, resumed :

‘ I think it would be more in accordance with the established custom of such occasions, if, instead of obliging Major Heyward to criminate himself, we were to force this fellow to prove his accusations. Step forward,’ he added more sternly to Obadiah.

The soldier did so, eying his interrogator meanwhile with a glance of mingled gloom and effrontery.

Norreys continued :

‘ You pretend to state that Major Heyward, on leaving this tent with the intention of assembling his troops for the pursuit and capture of a Royalist said to be concealed near Fairleigh, sent instead a message to this said officer, and delayed the departure of his men until time had elapsed for the same to escape ? Is this what you mean to tell us ?’

‘ Yes,’ said the Puritan boldly.

‘ Then perhaps you can inform us also by whom this message was sent ?’ said Norreys, looking full upon the man’s face, and perhaps half expecting to see him falter. But the soldier’s countenance changed not as he answered :

‘ It were not difficult to find a man to warn *him* of danger, but his name I know not.’

‘ And how was your intelligence obtained, and where are the witnesses to your truth ?’

‘ It was obtained from a sure source ; from one whom I had myself appointed to carry out my scheme, and who followed the messenger at a distance.’

‘ And wherefore is this spy not present,’ said Cromwell, ‘ and what design was he to carry out ?’

‘ That of insuring the capture of this Royalist whenever and wherever he was found,’ said Obadiah gloomily.

‘ You knew him then ?’

‘ I did.’

‘ And Major Heyward, did he also know him ?’

‘ Yea,’ answered the Puritan sternly ; ‘ but I knew not that he had guessed it then, or I would have gone alone and unordered, rather than have risked a failure by speaking as I did before him.’

'And who, then, is this man in whose welfare Major Heyward is so concerned as to induce him to forget alike his own safety and the duty that he owes to his cause?'

'He is his *brother*!'

Norreys started, but recovered himself, and was turning to the General, when the latter broke forth:

'Thy brother, Major Heyward! And thinkest thou that such a plea excuses thee. The life of a brother against the welfare of the land! It shall not, I promise thee!'

'May it please your Excellency,' said Norreys coldly, 'it were too much to expect, even of your most valiant officer, to expose his brother to a certain death, though to do so were to benefit his cause?'

'Did Brutus spare his sons?' asked Cromwell sternly; 'and shall a follower of Cromwell spare his brother? Charles Heyward, I attain thee of treason to thy lawful cause. To prison with him, guards, till we determine on his fate.'

The guards approached, but Charles laid his hand upon his sword, and menaced them with a look that few were bold enough to brave.

Norreys interposed:

'Beware,' he said hastily. 'Submission is thy only course, and such as I would counsel thee to follow; or,' he added sternly, 'if it is Major Heyward's purpose to brave his commander in his very presence, let him remember that he who thus draws his sword in open court draws on himself another punishment more severe than that against which he would protest. Nay,' he added, in a lower tone, as Charles, chafed by his position, seemed not to hear his words, 'at present we are your friends; do not cause us, by useless violence, to be no longer so.'

Charles bit his lip, as though half ashamed of his departure from his usual grave composure, and removed his hand; then fixing his eyes upon the General's angry countenance, he spoke in a tone rendered more bitter by its calmness:

'Is it thus ye would reward the many deeds I have done in thy service? Is it thus ye would pay me for the hardships I

have endured, and the battles I have fought, and the friends I have renounced? I have laboured from the time I first came into thy camp; I have thrown heart and soul into thy cause; I have striven day by day and night by night to do the work which thou hast given me; and now that I claim the poor guerdon of a brother's life *this* is my reward—arrest, attainder, perchance death! Truly, General Cromwell, 'tis a lordly recompense!

Cromwell's eye, hard, stern, cold though it were, fell beneath that of his officer; and as, white with passion, he turned his glance upon the assembled officers, and read in their faces their approval of their comrade's bold words, it was with difficulty that he could control himself sufficiently to reply:

'Major Heyward forgets, apparently, that the guerdon was *taken*, not asked for, and that he gave us neither time nor occasion to deny him. Had he not left us on false pretences; had he not worked upon the mistaken fidelity, or on the ignorance of his attendants, and offered himself to a post whose duties he was predetermined not to fulfil; had he not taken upon himself the appropriation of a boon which, we swear solemnly, we would have granted to his loyalty,—he had not stood thus before us. Had he waited until his brother was in our hands, and had then asked his life at our hands, though he were a foe ten times more deadly, his boon had been granted to him, and his valued services had not been disregarded. As it is, the treachery of the last few hours goes far to outweigh them.'

The words seemed fair to those that heard them, and many who were friends of Charles wished that his conduct had been otherwise. But in spite of Cromwell's proud asseveration Charles did not regret what he had done. A slight smile curled his lips, and it was understood.

'To ward with him,' cried Cromwell angrily; 'to ward with him during our pleasure! Major Heyward, your sword.'

Charles flung his sword violently to the ground as the *General* finished speaking, and was about to burst forth in



other and perhaps still more bitter reproach, when the general gave the signal for his removal, and a glance from general Norreys again warned him to obey. Obadiah seemed out to take his departure also, but turned back at the voice of Cromwell. He gave one look—half of anger, half of apunition—on his master as he quitted the tent with his arms, and then turning to the General, awaited his orders.

‘And thou, what shall we award thee for thy zealous intentions,’ said Cromwell at length. ‘It were hard that thou shouldst suffer for thy master’s crime. What can we do for thee?’

‘Naught,’ said the soldier gloomily. ‘I need no reward, neither do I ask one. It were enough for me had my vengeance been complete, and as that may not be, naught else will satisfy me. I must even wait for another opportunity.’

‘And what, then, is this vengeance,’ said Norreys, amazed, ‘which thy life seems bound up? What harm hath this young man done thee?’

‘He hath turned from our holy cause,’ said the Puritan firmly; ‘he hath followed the ways of the ungodly; he hath disgraced his name and lineage, and naught less than his life-blood can wash away the stain. Therefore hath he my vengeance, and therefore have I striven; but the day will yet come, I trust, when that vengeance shall be complete. May it please your Excellency to permit me to retire?’

‘Thou mayst do so,’ said Cromwell; ‘and for the better furtherance of thy laudable designs we would counsel thee to transfer thy service to one less willing to foil thy plans than thy master, Charles Heyward. And now, gentlemen,’ he added, ‘the man retired, ‘what can we say to this officer’s offence? merits he death or not, think ye?’

A murmur of dissent ran through the tent, but it was Norreys who gave utterance to the thoughts that they all shared.

‘We think, your Excellency, ’twere better profit to our holy cause—more in accordance with the noble generous character which distinguishes thy judgments—wert thou to overlook for

once the offence of thy true-hearted soldier; or at least, be lenient with him, in consideration of his fraternal feelings, and the difficulties which beset his course.'

'But,' said the General angrily, 'his feelings were no excuse for treachery. Had his brother been a prisoner in our hands—'

'He would not have been the first victim of civil war,' replied Norreys meaningly; 'but he would not have reached here alive. He is a brave man, and would have sold his life dearly. General, for the honour of our holy cause and the many services that he has rendered you, remember only the past: let that plead with you for the present.'

Cromwell stood for once irresolute; he himself was rather inclined towards Major Heyward, who, on many occasions, had proved himself a tried and valued friend; but there is small doubt that he would have sacrificed him, had it seemed expedient for him to do so.

'What say you all?' he said sternly, as he cast his cold but piercing glance around the circle. 'Has Norreys spoken for you all, or are there more excuses to allege?'

They replied that Norreys had well expressed their sentiments. Charles Heyward had many friends amongst them, and more than one was conscious to himself that he had, in his place, done the like.

There was a short pause, when Cromwell said gravely:

'Be it so, gentlemen; I yield to your suggestions, remembering Marston Moor and Naseby. We commute the sentence of death, which we well know him to have merited, to confinement during our pleasure. Only,' he added sternly, 'take heed how the like offence be again committed.'

Charles's imprisonment, though severe, was not of long duration. He was too useful an officer for Cromwell to banish him long from a post where he was generally beloved, and friends—true, faithful, uncompromising friends—and brave soldiers, were then at a premium in the Roundhead as in the Royalist army. Sir William Waller (the zealous commander of so many noble armies, the conqueror in so many battles), with Massey and other

Presbyterian generals, had fallen under suspicion, and had been imprisoned by the Parliament ; and Cromwell's personal friends were fast falling away.

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CHAPTER IX.

'There are within your kingdom many chiefs  
Who may do better service to the state,  
But not with better will than I have done.'

JOHANNA BAILLIE.

THE Royalist fugitives succeeded in reaching their camp without further molestation ; and the next three months found them working assiduously at their respective posts, though under circumstances the most discouraging and disastrous. The rising of the English Royalists had proved as unsuccessful as it had certainly been premature ; and the leaders, Langherne, Musgrave, and Holland, must have bitterly repented the precipitation which had hurried them into action without waiting for the arrival of their Scottish allies. Brave and daring, but few in number, with scant resources and little discipline, they had one by one fallen victims to their eagerness ; and whilst accusing Hamilton of tardiness and want of zeal, were reproached in turn by him for their imprudence and impatience. Shut up in the towns which they had undertaken to defend, or pursued into the hills of Wales, they fell at last before superior numbers, crowned with glory indeed, but having effected little for their King. Langherne had been amongst the first to yield ; and Ernest, after vainly waiting for better fortune in the South, turned his steps towards Scotland, there to join the Duke of Hamilton, and bring him the latest tidings of the war.

It was towards the middle of July that he reached the Scottish camp, whither Hertford had preceded him some weeks before. He waited upon General Middleton, who gladly received him as his kinsman, and hastened with him to the Duke, who was still actively preparing for a descent upon England.

The accounts which our hero brought with him from the

South were not such as would tend to dissipate the anxiety which was felt by all. The small parties of Royalists that had arisen in many of the southern counties had all more or less been defeated or dispersed. Langdale and Musgrave, it is true, had made themselves masters of Carlisle and Berwick, while Prince Maurice was well established at Pomfret. But these leaders were hourly threatened by the superior forces of the foe, and one and all looked to Hamilton for assistance. It was difficult for him to aid them; it was still more difficult to refuse; and when Ernest brought him another and yet more urgent petition that he would cross the Border and join the English Royalists, his doubt and despondency could no longer be concealed. It was in company with General Middleton that Ernest sought the presence of the Commander-in-Chief, with whom, it so happened, it was his first interview. He was interested in him for many things; most of all, perhaps, from the air of mystery with which his character was invested, and the doubt that lingered in the minds of those around him as to his true policy. The fact that he had been imprisoned by the King on an accusation of disloyalty, yet was now the head and promoter of the Engagement, was also a motive of interest to the gallant young Cavalier. His personal appearance, moreover, was extremely prepossessing: handsome, grave, even melancholy; with a quiet graceful dignity that, when little past the age of boyhood, had fascinated his sovereign, and been the first link of the long and perhaps fatal friendship that, with but little variation, would continue till death. He received Ernest kindly, and with his usual courtesy complimented General Middleton on the good service of his kinsman, and conversed with both with a cordiality and absence of pride or distance that pleased and surprised our hero. It seemed to him that it would be pleasant indeed to serve under so gentle and courteous a commander, and that love for their leader, no less than loyalty to their King, would spur on the soldiers to deeds of valour and to victory. He was mistaken. Hamilton was *too* gentle for the times in which he was called upon to command. He was wanting in authority, and preferred the opinion of others to his own. He

had not the experience or the force of character necessary to his position ; and he was perhaps too fully aware of his deficiency. When he had taken leave of the King, and applied himself to espouse his interests, first in the council-chamber and later in the field, it was not with the intention of making himself their leader. The command was offered—nay, it was forced upon him ; it was accepted after many protestations and with ill-concealed aversion. He would be foremost in the field, he said, but their head he would not be ; he remembered the charge that had been brought against him, and the distrust in which men had held him, and he would not arrogate to himself a position of so much power and so much responsibility. Perhaps it would have been better had his decision been final, had his scruples been respected, and his opinion revered. He was, however, overruled. The voice of the whole army called him to the command, voices that he both loved and honoured influenced or entreated him, until at length he yielded to their desire. Having once accepted his position, he had indeed laboured manfully to do justice to it ; but illness, despondency, the suspicions of those around him, the bitterness of his foes, and the lukewarmness of many of his friends, engendered a certain jealousy and distrust in a mind that had once been generous and open.

No sign of reserve or suspicion was on his face, however, when Ernest unfolded to him the plans of the English Royalists, and the state of their affairs in the South. Once or twice he passed his hand across his brow and sighed deeply, but he immediately resumed the conversation with increasing interest and attention.

‘Lord Holland is, then, a prisoner,’ he said at last, as though loth to credit the tidings.

‘It is true, your grace,’ replied Ernest regretfully. ‘His lordship was taken at St. Neott’s, whither he had retired after his defeat.’

‘He is a brave man,’ replied the Duke slowly ; ‘I fear me his fate will be a hard one. His enemies are not likely to forgive him this second secession from their ranks.’

‘Yet is he easier spared than some others,’ said the more

hasty Laneric. 'Bethink you that he has striven against us, and has already once left our banner.'

'I fear me his reception by his Majesty was scarce warm enough to retain the services that he yet of his free will offered us. He has done us good also by using his influence with the Parliament. May they remember, now that he is again in their power, that he has also done much good to them! Proceed, young man,' he added kindly to Ernest. 'Sir Charles Lucas is in freedom?'

'He is, your grace; but the forces that he had raised have been also dispersed and defeated. He prays your grace to send succour to them.'

'And Prince Maurice is still unmolested at Pomfret? That was a gallant conquest. We hope that he will retain it.'

'Prince Rupert has shown him how,' said Laneric. 'I mean no harm, Hamilton, but the Princes are somewhat unfortunate.'

'I trust that the same stigma may not rest upon us,' said the Duke sadly; then with a more cheerful tone he continued, 'But we must hope for the best; and with Langdale and Musgrave we may hold ourselves equal to our foes.'

'Lord Musgrave entreats of your grace that you will hasten to relieve him.'

'And Langdale, has he also like plea and petition?' said Laneric quickly.

'Sir Marmaduke, my lord, awaits with impatience the approach of his grace.'

'Tis the old story, Laneric,' said the Duke wearily. 'They will not be satisfied. *How* can I leave Scotland with so inadequate a force? *How* can I proceed southward when my levies are incomplete and my soldiers untrained? And why should I do so?' he added, after a pause. 'Because a handful of Englishmen have arisen too soon, and by their own precipitation rush headlong to destruction? You cannot ask me to do it,' he said; 'it would be the ruin of our cause.'

There was a brief silence when he had spoken. Middleton and Hertford, both present, thought and felt with him. Ernest,

younger and full of rashness and enthusiasm, would perchance have wished the decision otherwise ; and then he was the latest from the spot, and had served with Musgrave and with Langdale, and cordially sympathised with the gallant little band that risked itself so readily for the King. His thoughts were not spoken, for he felt it were wanting in respect to breathe them then, but his countenance was, as ever, an honest index to his mind.

‘I believe,’ said Laneric impulsively, ‘that that young soldier yonder is of the same mind as myself. Speak out, Colonel ; his grace is a lenient commander, and will not cry you shame that you think differently from himself.’

‘Indeed no,’ replied the Duke ; ‘a brave man’s opinion is ever worth the asking, though this young officer is at best inexperienced. But say on, Captain Heyward. You have brought us the message safely, and, I doubt not, through many risks and perils, and thus merit the poor reward of a hearing on the subject.’

‘Your grace asks the opinion of a boy like my nephew ?’ said Middleton somewhat hotly. ‘Methinks that men older than himself have been ready in their answers.’

‘True,’ replied the Duke mildly ; ‘and yet, having done so well in his present service, your nephew has earned a right to speak, as I have said ; besides,’ he added kindly, ‘he who has been latest amongst them should know best their resources and their claims on our assistance. How left you the southern troops, young man ?’

‘They were disorganised and disheartened, your grace, but, on the promise of speedy succour, would endeavour to collect their forces, and join you in the North. I will not conceal from your grace,’ he added, after a pause, ‘that the attempt would be a desperate one.’

‘You see, Laneric,’ said the Duke, ‘the futility of your scheme. We should enter England at great risk and peril, our army half organised ; and the southern troops would either be entirely unformed or be cut to pieces before a junction could be effected.’

'You forget,' returned Laneric, 'that if the army of the South is no more, the northern force at least is in tolerable condition.'

'A few thousand men,' returned Hamilton quietly. 'Nay, Laneric, for the present you must abide by my decision.'

Laneric began hastily to recount the advantages of a sudden descent upon England; but, sanguine as he was, the more prudent Hamilton demurred, the more so that Middleton applauded his decision, and Hertford gravely and quietly commended it. Ernest still seemed disappointed in the result of his message. Laneric leant to him with the air of a fellow-sufferer; but both were too sensible of the position of Hamilton as their leader (and to Laneric a revered elder brother) to urge their opinion any further. After a short silence had ensued, it was broken by Hertford:

'Although the state and position of the army do not seem to allow of an immediate effort in behalf of our English allies, I would submit that all haste be observed in the completion of our levies, and in the training of such troops as we already possess. Callendar and Baillie are already doing their utmost. Were it not well that some other detachments should be formed in this and in the adjoining county, under the superintendence of some reliable officer?'

'This is indeed an important suggestion,' said Hamilton quickly, 'and will be pleasing to every one, if you, my lord, will so far favour us as to set the example. Monroe can have a separate command further south. Colonel Heyward, as the kinsman of Laneric and Middleton, and having served us faithfully for two campaigns, may be considered entitled to promotion. I will therefore reserve for him the first vacant colonelcy that offers, and General Middleton will doubtless meanwhile admit him on his staff.'

'Your grace is most kind in thus honouring my nephew,' said Middleton. 'He is young for such a post as you propose.'

'So was Falkland, so was Sunderland. Your nephew has besides shown us that we can trust him. There are plenty of ~~men~~ *supply* for his inexperience. Your own example is sufficient.



Be prudent as well as brave, young man,' he added kindly, 'and I am quite sure we shall have no reason to regret your appointment.'

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## CHAPTER X.

'He watch'd, in dreams of power and fame.' HEMANS.

HITHERTO Ernest's military life had been somewhat monotonous, and distinguished by few adventures of importance; he was now entering upon a different scene. The title of colonel, which though at present honorary was not likely to remain so, had placed him in a different and less dependent position than had as yet been his fortune. But at the same that it afforded him a greater liberty of action, a larger scope for his abilities, it drew him also into closer contact with his uncle, and brought his conduct more distinctly under the immediate notice of that general. Up to the time of the surrender of Oxford, the internal arrangement of the Royalist camp had been fairly satisfactory. Discipline was good, the troops well trained, the officers generally efficient; the King had for the most part commanded in person, Prince Rupert was something of a martinet; but since then the state of affairs had changed. The veteran forces had been wasted and spent in vain and useless struggles; the new recruits were barely trained, their officers scarcely more experienced than themselves. Hamilton, too mild and gentle to have been under any circumstances an efficient commander, was further incapacitated by the lawless spirit of his troops. Middleton, fresh from the strictest observances of the Covenanters, would fain have adopted a different line, but was obliged to bend himself to the exigences of his position. His officers accordingly did mostly as they pleased: the men too were ill-paid; they considered their services as voluntary, and to enforce discipline was dangerous. The King himself had stooped to entreat where he should have commanded; and it was no unfrequent occurrence for the troops to deny obedience to some particular officer, or to refuse their assent to a particular line of

march. No previous experience was of avail ; the officers had to act as occasion offered or their own policy directed. Ernest himself was by nature too high-spirited and impetuous to submit himself readily to the rigours of unnecessary restraint. If his duty had hitherto led him to do so, it was as a duty not as a pleasure ; and it was only to be expected that the first taste of comparative liberty would be indulged in to the utmost. He was however too good a soldier, too ardent a partisan for his breaches of order to be serious ; and if he erred at all, it was usually more from the exuberance of enthusiasm or from mere boyish recklessness than from any real intention of transgressing his duties. One of the principal escapades into which his thoughtlessness, no less than his true love of adventure, led him must be here related, as, unimportant in itself, it formed one in a series of events which were destined for a while to disturb the even tenor of his military life.

It was evening in the Royalist camp.

Ernest Heyward paced up and down before his tent. The soldiers as they passed to and fro in the performance of their respective duties, the sentinels replacing each other as time went by, glanced at him and wondered why he lingered. He did not notice them. Thought, anxious thought, was written on his brow ; nor was it wholly painful. There was a keen enthusiasm in his heart that night ; an eager longing for the glory of his cause, the triumph of his King. The first blow of the campaign was struck, though but in an unimportant skirmish with some stray bands in the service of Argyle. It was but little ; but it made the hot blood leap hotter through his veins ; it made the soldier's impulse for the fight swell in his heart, and urge him on to gallant deeds, such as he had read of, heard of, dreamt of, ay, and *seen*. But why, then, his brow clouded, his heart anxious, if not sad ? For himself he fears nothing. Brave, even to rashness, he has ever shown himself ; his very enemies acknowledge him to be so. It is for others that he fears ; it is for others that he marks with anxiety the fast-darkening evening ; for others that with a muttered exclamation he now turns hastily away in the direction of his uncle's tent. Eagerly

gives the watchword ; eagerly the soldiers hang back to let him pass, for he is well loved amongst them. There are few among Middleton's troops that have not respect and affection for his gallant young kinsman, who already stands so high in the General's estimation.

But to-night Middleton is busy. Officers old and hoary, worn with long years of service, and gallant young Cavaliers from Scotland's noblest houses, have been with him ; and each as he passes out greets the young Colonel with courtesy and friendship. But he also desires an interview ; he advances ; the sentinel accosts him :

'General Middleton is engaged, sir.'

Ernest glanced towards the speaker, and recognised him. John Hargreaves, for that was his name, was an old retainer of Middleton's ; he had known Ernest as a child ; and now that the fortunes of war had again brought them together, neither had been backward in renewing acquaintance with the other. During the last week or two they had met as often as their respective stations admitted ; and while Hargreaves looked with deepening affection upon Ernest, the latter on his side had learnt to regard the veteran in the light less of an inferior than of a friend. Many a long talk had they had together ; many a lesson of stricter discipline learnt in the sterner army of the Covenanters ; many a battle of the past years had been detailed to Ernest in preparation for the future ; many a wise counsel had met the young officer's inexperience. Ernest knew now that Hargreaves loved him ; he knew that he could trust him ; and through the wear and tear of camp life, his kind word and winning smile were never wanting to his uncle's valued and faithful follower.

'Engaged !' he exclaimed, as he restrained his impatience, and prepared to await the termination of the interview. 'Why, Hargreaves, I believed myself the sole officer abroad ; and, lo ! I have met colonels and majors and captains, as though his grace had appointed my uncle to hold a *levée* instead of him. What is going on, think you ? Any prospect of a battle ?'

'O no, sir ! There is not an enemy worth fighting with. A

few bands of rebels there may be, but they would not venture an attack. But you must be laughing at me, Colonel. You must know as well as I do that there's no battle in prospect.'

'Then what on earth is my uncle so busy with? A court-martial is unusual. Perhaps that is it?'

'Wrong again, Colonel,' replied the old man, with a smile; 'we don't deal in such things *nowadays*. You always did like to leap at conclusions, sir, but you're out of your reckoning this time. No, it's only some of the officers that have been to know about the supplies.'

'Then Colonel Hamilton *has* returned?' said Ernest, with a look of relief.

'No, Colonel, he has not; he was expected some hours since.'

'Neither is he one unnecessarily to delay. How long those officers are with my uncle!' he added somewhat impatiently. 'Do you know who they are, Hargreaves? They are slow enough, whoever they may be.'

'Lord Hertford is there, Colonel, and I believe some one else. I am sure that his lordship is there,' he added, after a pause.

'Then I must recall my speech,' said Ernest quickly. 'When Lord Hertford is on the scene, *I* must be content to wait.'

He sighed as he spoke, however, and it seemed to Hargreaves that a shade of doubt, anxiety, or perplexity had fallen on his always thoughtful countenance; a deeper shade, the old man argued, than had any right to rest there.

'Is your business of importance, Colonel?' he said respectfully.

'I think so. I am afraid it is; but the future only can decide. It may be a matter of life and death, or it may be of no consequence whatever. Hargreaves, when *will* Lord Hertford have finished with his confidences?'

'You have more zeal than patience, Colonel Heyward; but I, too, am in a hurry. I've a bit of business in the Duke's *quarters*, some despatches for his grace. They should have

gone half an hour since, but there's no one to relieve me. It's sad discipline nowadays, Colonel.'

'Let us see if we can improve it,' said the young man, laughing. 'Those despatches are of consequence most probably; they should be delivered. Yes, this will do, Hargreaves. You may take the letters, and I will guard the tent for you until the relief appears. He can't be much longer.'

'I daresay, Colonel,' said Hargreaves, also laughing, for he evidently considered the proposal as a jest. 'Now what would the General say, I wonder, or Lord Hertford, ay, or the Duke? We should never hear the end of it.'

'So much the better. But, seriously, I mean it; you *must* go, Hargreaves. The Duke *must* have the despatches, and I have a fancy, moreover, to be sentinel. Your time has expired, besides; and you know, Hargreaves, that you are, partly at least, under my orders.'

'Well, Colonel Heyward, I don't much like it; but, as you say, I am under your orders, and I should not like it to be said that Hargreaves, at his age, had disobeyed his superior. But I hope you will bear me out with the General, sir.'

'O yes, all right,' was the gay answer; and though Hargreaves still hesitated, a second command finished the question; and relinquishing his musket with a sigh he hurried off, devoutly hoping that the relief would arrive before Hertford's business with Middleton was concluded.

Ernest remained at his post. It certainly was not much in accordance with discipline, this new freak of his; but his motive was a good one, and only thus would he have undertaken it that evening, when anxiety for a friend's safety had banished his usual carelessness. And he would have filled his new post satisfactorily, would have defied the penetration of his superiors, and shown himself at least as good a sentinel as he was undoubtedly a gallant officer, had not the same deep anxiety taken possession of his mind. But so it was. What carelessness and thoughtlessness would not have effected was nevertheless the fruit of his perplexities. His footsteps slackened gradually in their hasty walk; his thoughts flew further and

further from the tent which he had undertaken to guard; a thousand other dreams were in his mind; he leant against the wall, and fell into a profound reverie. How long he thus remained he never knew. The sound of voices inside the tent had long ceased to reach him, save in a dreamy and confused manner; the approaching step was unheard by him; the thoughts, the duties of the present were for once forgotten, when a hand was laid suddenly on his shoulder, and Lord Hertford stood before him.

‘In good truth, General Middleton has efficient guards,’ cried the Marquis angrily; but as Ernest hastily advanced, the light from the inner tent flashed upon him.

‘Colonel Heyward!’ ejaculated Hertford, ‘is *this* your discipline, young man, for I cannot conceive that I have mistaken your identity?’ The last words in a grave stern tone that brought the colour into Ernest’s cheek, though his glance did not blench from the steady gaze of his superior.

‘I cry you mercy, General,’ he said, with a mixture of respect and gaiety in his voice. ‘I fear me I have greatly failed in my unwonted task, and should make but a sorry sentinel.’

‘I can scarcely believe it!’ exclaimed Hertford. ‘What new freak is this? A pretty example for your soldiers, indeed; masquerading at this time of night, when you should have been in your quarters an hour since! Where is Hargreaves?’

Ernest perceived that Lord Hertford was displeased, and dropping his careless tone, answered with deference:

‘Indeed, my lord, I am not so guilty as you fancy. I may be wrong; but my judgment, not my will, must bear the blame.’

He paused, as if waiting for permission to proceed.

Lord Hertford looked at him steadily for a moment, then, softened a little by his respectful bearing, ‘I do not understand you,’ he said.

‘I was waiting for an interview with my uncle,’ replied Ernest. ‘Some despatches had to be conveyed to his grace. *The sentinel* who should have replaced Hargreaves was not forthcoming; I therefore took upon myself the task of guarding

the tent, in order that the despatches might be delivered without further delay.'

'And most zealous you have proved yourself in your self-imposed duties,' said Lord Hertford, with a meaning glance towards the half-opened tent. 'However, in consideration—' He stopped. 'I believe the despatches *were* important; but whether General Middleton will approve of the step you have taken I do not pretend to say. Stop, you cannot go in just yet. Colonel Seymour is still there, and unless your business be pressing, I recommend you to postpone it till to-morrow. It is pressing? Let me hear it, then.'

Ernest hurriedly explained it; willingly also, for he had the very greatest opinion of Lord Hertford's experience, and perhaps hoped for his support. The Marquis, however, was the very opposite of Ernest, calm, grave, and prudent; and the present position of the young Colonel, as an impromptu sentinel, threw an air of romance and knight-errantry over a scheme that at another time would have been regarded with favour. His expressions of astonishment were not consoling to our hero, and attracted, moreover, the attention of General Middleton, who, surprised at the long conversation outside his tent, now startled the two officers by his sudden appearance.

His presence brought a momentary pause in the colloquy, and for an instant they looked wonderingly at each other, none of them apparently disposed to break the silence, though Ernest seemed eager and excited; Hertford, grave but surprised, with a faint smile quivering betimes across his mouth, as some new phase of the adventure came in sight.

'What on earth is all this?' said Middleton finally, as he in turn recognised his nephew in the sentinel. 'Colonel Heyward, what are you here for? I cannot allow my officers and guards to change places in this way. Have you given up your troop in charge to Hargreaves, young man? My Lord Hertford, you are of my opinion?'

'I have already been remarking upon it to your nephew,' returned the Marquis. 'I have been admiring the state of discipline, General, as exemplified in your officers.'

‘I should think so,’ cried Middleton angrily. ‘It is positively shameful. I cannot understand it in the least. Will you explain yourself, sir?’

‘He has done that already,’ said Hertford, ‘and has ha won me over to forgiveness. I have lectured sufficiently f one while; and the next time he makes himself a sentinel I will probably be a little more efficient.’

And as he spoke Seymour emerged from the tent, and immediately joined them. He understood the case intuitively.

‘I do not understand you even now, my lord,’ said Middleton.

‘I have been lecturing your nephew,’ replied Hertford quietly, ‘for taking upon himself the duties of sentinel, ar then not fulfilling them. He allowed me to pass out u noticed and—’

‘And unsaluted, eh, Hertford?’ struck in Colonel Seymour ‘Was your lecture due to the laxity of his guard, or to his wa of deference to yourself?’

Middleton glanced angrily at him, but Hertford disdain an answer, and continued :

‘I repeat, I was surprised at his negligence, the more when I recognised his rank. I do not consider it as consona with discipline for officers to change duties with their men. ( course, General Middleton knows best; and may, perhaps, n disapprove of a little romance and knight-errantry in h nephew.’

‘But I *do* disapprove,’ exclaimed Middleton angrily. ‘ cannot think what possessed you to do such a thing,’ l added sternly, addressing his nephew. ‘Send away the gua from my tent, indeed! A pretty pass your discipline h come to.’

‘I trust, uncle, my arm is as able to defend you as any o of your soldiers,’ said Ernest calmly.

‘Then you think wrongly,’ stormed Middleton, whose irascil temper had been by no means improved by a long *séance* wi Colonel Seymour. ‘You will please to remember, Ernest, th you are an officer, and that I am your general, sir; and that y



are my sister's grandson, sir ; and that you owe me respect, alike as your kinsman and as your general, Colonel Heyward.'

'A nephew may be allowed a few liberties with an uncle's tent, I should think,' said Colonel Seymour.

'And I should think not, sir. Will you allow Colonel Heyward to explain himself, if you please ?'

Ernest repeated the substance of the explanation which he had already given to Hertford. The General listened to him with surprise.

'Those despatches ! They were important, certainly, and it is well they went. Still,' added he, as he caught a mischievous glance in Seymour's eye, 'you had no right so to act ; and—I am—well, I'm very much displeased with you.'

'I think you are rather hard upon him,' said Colonel Seymour bluntly.

'Sir !' ejaculated the General.

'Well, let it pass for once, General,' said Hertford. 'He is doubtless in the wrong ; but his motives at least were excellent, and we have vindicated our discipline by a pretty long lecture ; so, if you will now condone the offence and give his business a hearing, I shall esteem it a favour.'

Middleton looked surprised, but he seldom cared to combat the opinion of Hertford ; and though his irritation was still far from subsided, he led the way back to his tent, and seating himself, prepared to listen with attention.

Colonel Heyward then in a few words informed him of the non-return of Colonel Hamilton and his men ; of his own consequent anxiety, and his fear that they had been intercepted, or at least delayed, by the enemy. The General listened with undisguised annoyance and some apparent uneasiness ; but on Ernest further requesting a party to go in search of them, himself at their head, he was at once angrily refused.

'By no manner of means, Colonel Heyward. My troops have enough to do, without coursing the country for men who are quite able to take care of themselves—just as my officers have sufficient duties of their own, without unnecessarily adopting those of their subordinates.'

It was not a happy moment for the suggestion that followed, but Ernest was too eager to perceive it.

‘Will you allow me to go in search of them myself, General Middleton?’

‘Certainly; you have full permission,’ said the General, rising from his seat. ‘Ernest Heyward, I think you must have lost your senses.’

‘Still I have your permission, General?’

‘Folly, nonsense! What good could you do?’ cried Seymour.

‘I could do what other men can do,’ was the proud reply.

‘You wish to do what other men can *not* do,’ said Hertford. ‘General Middleton, do you mean what you say?’

‘Undoubtedly, Lord Hertford. If it is Colonel Heyward’s desire to expose himself needlessly and uselessly to peril, it is neither my will nor my pleasure to prevent it. I think our conference may finish.’ But though his words were decided, his expression was not so.

Ernest bowed, and was about to withdraw. Hertford laid his hand on his shoulder to detain him, and there was a moment’s silence. Each of those present gave, despite his better sense, a certain sympathy to him who had offered himself to so daring an adventure. The two elder officers felt something more—a keen anxiety almost amounting to dread, for they weighed more accurately than did Seymour the chances of success. Ernest turned to his uncle, and, possessing himself of his half-reluctant hand, carried it respectfully to his lips; then turned to go, but the General called him back.

‘You may take a troop, Ernest.’

‘No, thank you, uncle; I will go alone,’ replied his nephew firmly. ‘I would not risk other and more valuable lives on so uncertain and perhaps profitless an errand. And,’ he added, ‘if Heaven favour my mission, may it in some degree atone for the neglect that has to-night displeased you!’

‘This is madness,’ said Middleton indignantly. ‘Hertford, you are silent. Do you countenance his folly? I will not hear of it,’ he added, after a pause. ‘There is not any common sense

amongst you. Retire to your quarters, Colonel Heyward ; and attend to your duty as an officer, instead of dreaming yourself Don Quixote.'

'You recall your permission, General Middleton !' said Colonel Seymour, dismayed.

'I do recall it. Colonel Heyward, retire to your tent, at your peril, to await further orders. A rescue, indeed ! You are all mad together.'

Ernest attempted to regain his advantage, but failed, and was silent. Hertford signed to him to withdraw, and, himself taking leave, followed him out ; Seymour remaining behind.

For some short distance the two officers walked on together in silence ; then Hertford said :

'General Middleton has decided for you in the most prudent way ; yet I am sorry he has done so. I believe you to be a passable knight-errant, though you have proved yourself a sorry sentinel. I am myself most anxious about Colonel Hamilton, and would fain have sent to seek him. Had you accepted the troop that was offered to you, you might have been permitted to go.'

'It was my purpose to have asked for a troop when I first sought my uncle,' said Ernest somewhat sadly. 'Your lordship knows that he refused me. Having offered myself to the adventure alone, it did not become me to retract.'

'O, very well,' said Lord Hertford ; 'then I'll say no more about it. I was not aware that Colonel Heyward was so proud, or I would not have tendered him my counsel. But I think I must bid you "good-night" here—our ways lie apart.'

He extended his hand as if to take leave, but Ernest eagerly detained him.

'Lord Hertford,' he said, after a moment's pause, 'if I accepted this troop, think you that my uncle would relent ?'

'Come, that is somewhat more rational,' said the Marquis good-humouredly ; 'there is nothing like trying.'

'You think he will consent ?' said Ernest still eagerly.

'I think it is possible, were he sufficiently well entreated,' said the Marquis, with a meaning smile.

Ernest hesitated, then said somewhat diffidently :

‘I can at least do my best. My lord, might I ask—may I venture to entreat your support?’

Hertford smiled again somewhat gravely :

‘You want me to accompany you. I think not. The hour is so late that no time must be lost. Your uncle is displeased, and perchance not unjustly. He has bidden you to your tent, and it were best to obey him. However,’ he added, ‘I will do my best for you. Go to your quarters, and get ready your troop, whilst I will obtain you permission. In any case there is no harm done, and you will be ready to start.’

‘And you think I have a chance?’ said Colonel Heyward, when he had warmly thanked him for his kindness.

‘You have every chance, Colonel Heyward, if I can speak to your uncle. He but seldom refuses me.’

‘And I have your approbation?’

‘You have indeed ; may success attend you on your mission ! For in good truth, if you accomplish it, we shall have no need to reproach you with negligence in your duty, in spite of what has happened to-night,’ he added, with a smile, as, shaking Ernest’s hand warmly, he once more turned in the direction of General Middleton’s tent.

Alas, for once he was unsuccessful in his mission. The General was obstinate, for he was angry ; and the calm grave reasoning of Hertford was not listened to. There was, indeed, just ground for the refusal. The party under Hamilton had not returned, it was true, but what was the cause of the delay ? If they had failed in their mission, Ernest could not assist them ; if they had been attacked and overcome, it was too late for a rescue. Hertford knew this, but took a middle course of argument. They might have been dealed, and might yet meet the enemy, and might be glad of assistance from the camp. It was a chance, but it was not an impossibility, and he urged that no harm would be done in the venture. Colonel Seymour was there, and urged exactly the same, but it was with his usual loquacity and his usual heedlessness ; that both were fatal to *his cause* he had discovered too often. Both were fatal to

Ernest, as Hertford had from the first expected. Middleton remained inexorable; and Hertford at last left the tent with a positive refusal to his request. He walked slowly and thoughtfully towards his young friend's quarters, unwilling to inflict the mortification of a second disappointment, and scarcely heeding the undercurrent of conversation that Seymour kept up resolutely by his side. As he drew near the tent, however, he marked nothing stirring. Everything seemed unusually quiet: the troop that he expected to see drawn up before the tent was nowhere visible; and he began to think either that Colonel Hamilton had returned, or that Ernest had given up the adventure as hopeless. Seymour suggested that it was no use proceeding, but Hertford had promised to return. He approached the tent, therefore, and challenged the guard; but what was his surprise, his indignation, his perplexity when, in lieu of Colonel Heyward, he received a small billet, in which these words were hastily written:

'My Lord,—Having waited in vain for your return, and being secure of your successful mediation, I have ventured to anticipate your message, and am starting to the rescue.

'Your lordship's respectfully,

'ERNEST HEYWARD.'

For once the calm, grave, impassible Hertford was thoroughly angry. He did not, however, give evidence that he was so; but his tone was sterner and colder than its wont when he directed the sentinel to inform Colonel Heyward that he should expect to be waited on when he returned; and then cut short the torrent of Colonel Seymour's exclamations and inquiries, and ordered him back to his quarters. He himself walked slowly back to General Middleton's tent for the third time that night. He was angry, not only with Ernest, but also with Middleton, whose obstinacy and temper had been the original cause of the dilemma; by and by he began to be angry with himself for having given the Colonel so much reason to trust his intercession. Had he been less confident of success, he argued, Ernest would not have dared to proceed upon his mission; and when he had

remembered this he took home to himself most of his dissatisfaction, and arrived at the General's tent prepared to lay the matter calmly before him, and to take as much of the blame as he conscientiously could upon himself.

General Middleton was, however, far less placable even than he had expected, and he had not been sanguine. He had, indeed, every reason for displeasure : his temper, always irritable, was peculiarly sensitive on the matter of his personal authority. Ernest had seriously offended ; and, for the second time that evening, a stormy interview was the consequence. Hertford left the General abruptly, and in some anxiety for Ernest ; and it is more than probable that, had Seymour been there with his usual interference, Ernest might have bitterly repented his indiscretion.

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## CHAPTER XI.

‘ His arguments are the emblems of his mien,  
Mild but not faint, and forcing though serene.’ GARTH.

It would be impossible to describe the indignation of Hargreaves when, on returning from executing his business, he found the General's tent unguarded, Ernest absent, and Middleton in a state of anger far exceeding any that he had ever yet given way to ; and his temper had been always a violent one. On the present occasion he had more than exhausted his very lengthened vocabulary of reproaches, which he heaped recklessly on Hertford, Ernest, and every one and every thing that came in his way, not excepting the unoffending Hargreaves himself. Colonel Heyward had hitherto avoided any open collision with his uncle ; and it was therefore with renewed astonishment that the soldier gathered from the tide of incoherent sentences with which he was honoured that Ernest was the chief, if not the only, offender. Where the Colonel himself was he did not at the moment know, and only hoped most devoutly that he had *not entangled* himself in some serious scrape. He would have

wished to proceed at once in search of him, but that was impossible ; and it was not until late on the following morning that he took advantage of a commission in that quarter of the camp to wait upon his favourite officer.

He arrived just at the right moment ; for Ernest, tired and excited after a successful adventure, had just ridden up slowly to his tent and dismounted. Colonel Hamilton was with him ; and Ernest, ere he entered his tent, laid his hand sportively on his friend's steed, and said gaily :

'Say no more, Hamilton, I pray you. I only did for you what we should all do for each other, and what you would do gladly for me, if occasion required.'

'Nevertheless, I should feel most ungrateful did I not express something of my feelings towards you,' said the Colonel warmly. 'It was a kind thought and a most gallant service, and does honour to your friendship as well as good to our cause. I had fancied our mission was in vain until you joined us, and those rascally Roundheads are now properly served. I must to his grace to report myself ; and next to Lord Hertford, as you say 'twas through his influence that you joined me. You will come with me ?'

'Why, no ; I must report myself to my uncle, with whom I parted but coldly last night. Commend me to Lord Hertford, Colonel Hamilton ; but perchance there is a message awaiting me.' And pressing his friend's hand, he turned to enter his tent, in perfect ignorance of the offence for which he was about to be called to account. Seeing Hargreaves approach, he walked up to him with :

'Well, Hargreaves, so you are come to greet me on my return with an armful at least of reproaches ; for I guess from your face that my last night's adventure has been visited on you.'

'I do not know where you have been, Colonel, or what you have *done*, but the General is mighty angry with you ; and I guess it has something to do with the sentinel affair.'

'Nay, but that is too bad,' said Ernest, 'to make so much of the grievance. I had held it forgiven and forgotten. Perhaps it may be by this time.'

'Why, for that, Colonel, I can't tell you. I've not seen the General this morning. But he *was* in a way when I did. I couldn't sleep a wink for the thought of it; and if I was to live till doomsday and the morning after, I couldn't forget it. I don't know what he didn't say, or what you could have done, sir; but if he had found you asleep at your post, he couldn't have been more angry.'

'Very likely not,' replied Ernest, laughing; 'that being precisely the case, or rather,' he added, smiling at Hargreaves' look of horror, 'it was Hertford disturbed me, and from as pleasant a dream as I ever had.'

'Well, sir, if you choose to do such things, I can't say nothing.'

'Choose!' exclaimed Ernest. 'Why, how could I help it! Of course there was a scene—the General was displeased; and, I must own, justly so; and Hertford was a little bit rigid on the subject of discipline. And at last, but this was much later, I obtained the permission for which I had come there—permission to make a sortie for the relief of Colonel Hamilton.'

'And did you go, Colonel?'

'I have but now returned; and, as you perceive, have been successful.'

'I understood,' replied Hargreaves, 'that permission was refused. They were saying so up yonder.'

'It was refused, Hargreaves, certainly; but Lord Hertford approved, and leaving him to obtain what I could not myself, I took French leave—and went.'

'Without orders!' said Hargreaves, perfectly aghast at his coolness, and perhaps paying more attention than a Royalist might have done to this disregard of discipline.

'The orders were to follow, and I suppose they have done so,' said Ernest. 'At least I hope so,' he added, a doubt for the first time flashing unpleasantly through his mind.

'It is to be hoped for, indeed, sir; or I would not be you when you next meet the General.'

'That will be very soon, then,' said Ernest; 'for I am going



directly ;' and, with a careless smile, he turned towards his

the smile faded as he did so. The sentinel saluted him fully, and, without speaking, tendered to him a letter. It from Hertford—grave, stern, and cold. It merely contained intimation to wait upon him immediately, but Ernest guessed contents at once. Either the message had not been favourable to Hertford himself was displeased with him. Perhaps at that moment the second alternative seemed the worst ; for he was deeply attached to the Marquis, grave and undemonstrative as to the relations between them.

He set out at once, eager to obey this mandate if he had so far failed in the last.

He meant meanwhile to return to Colonel Hamilton. Having addressed himself to his grace, and received his commendations for good service, he proceeded to Lord Hertford's tent to thank him for his assistance in obtaining the reinforcements for

Middleton was there also, his anger partially cooled as to the outward effect, but his sense of injured dignity as bitter as before. Both were anxious, however, for news of the foraging party ; and Colonel Hamilton's entrance was greeted with many expressions of satisfaction and thankfulness.

'Were you successful?' said the General, when the usual compliments were interchanged. 'And why did you return so

because, had it not been for the efficient aid you sent us, we could have returned with empty hands,' replied Hamilton firmly.

'I sent you no aid !' exclaimed Middleton hotly. 'If you had sent such, it was no wish of mine. Why, it was the wildest scheme man ever heard of to send in search of you at that

it was nevertheless successful whoever sent it,' said the General, surprised. 'I understood Colonel Heyward that it was because that I owed it ; to you and to Lord Hertford.'

'It was to his own imagination, I believe,' said Lord Hertford gravely. 'I was unsuccessful in my mission.'

'Colonel Heyward should have told you, Colonel Hamilton,' cried Middleton, 'that he met you in direct defiance of my orders; though, of course, I do not now regret that he went. I could not dream that they would be of assistance to you.'

'Why, in point of fact the real battle was over,' said Hamilton, 'and we were within a mile of the camp.'

'I told you so, my Lord Hertford,' said Middleton, bending his stern eyes on the calm features of his coadjutor. 'I told you that the scheme was a mad one, and that if aid were needed it would have been needed some hours before. I *told* you it was too late for a rescue, and that it was mere folly to send one.'

'The real battle was over,' replied Hamilton quietly. 'We were attacked many miles away by a more numerous troop, and after a sharp skirmish defeated. Some of my men were wounded. I myself lost my horse; our supplies fell into the hands of the enemy, and my troop was dispersed. Nay,' he said, as Hertford's grave eyes were fixed questioningly upon him, 'my men fought hard, even desperately; but being of inferior numbers, and encumbered with baggage, the chances were very much against us. There is, besides, somewhat less discipline with us than with the foe, and our troops are less accustomed to service. We retreated towards the camp, but our progress was slow; we were embarrassed by our wounded, and the night was growing dark. We were already far later than we had expected to be. There was no chance of reaching the camp before morning, and we pitched our tents to avoid the dangers of a night march on such a hilly road. About day-dawn, however, the alarm was given that a troop was approaching. We were soon on the alert, but discovered them to be friends. We detailed our misfortune; and your nephew insisted on our retracing our steps, and winning back our supplies. We did so, and were successful.'

'Bravely done,' said Hertford.

Middleton was silent.

Hamilton paused a moment, and continued:

'Although thus reinforced we were still inferior in strength, and our troops had been all night on the move. The foe, on the contrary, had been quietly encamped, and were prepared for

tance; but my men were all anxious to retrieve previous s, and our allies were yet more successful. I can only regret General Middleton was not present to witness so brilliant a age of arms, that he might appreciate, as I do, the courage the loyalty of his gallant nephew.'

Middleton may possibly have been pleased at the commen- on of his kinsman, but he did not see fit to show it. Hert- , after watching him intently for some moments, turned to nilton and said :

'Colonel Heyward has deeply offended his uncle, and has transgressed all rules of discipline by the very action you ire; yet I think that the gallantry he has displayed and the ice he has rendered should appeal for forgiveness.'

'Indeed I think so,' said Colonel Hamilton; 'and I will my- most earnestly entreat General Middleton to overlook the ice, which, I am convinced, was unintentional.'

Middleton shook his head.

'Colonel Heyward is my nephew, but that is no reason for y. The affair belongs rather to a court-martial, and his e will have to judge of it.'

A court-martial—that is surely unnecessary severity,' said ford and Hamilton in a breath.

Nay,' replied Middleton, 'tis but justice. He has broken laws.'

Ay, but in a manner that was worthy of praise, so gallant so loyal has he shown himself,' said Hamilton. 'Leastways ink that he has merited his pardon.'

Come, forgive and forget, General,' said Hertford, with a s. 'With Colonel Hamilton, I would have you look lightly ie offence.'

You are always his champion,' said Middleton, relaxing, for as not altogether displeased at being thus earnestly en- ed. 'Let him keep out of my way though, or abide by the equences.'

Hertford privately agreed with him; for he knew Middleton and that a moment of vexation might reverse his decision. However, thanked him warmly, and assured him that Ernest

should be duly reprimanded, and made sensible of the fault he had committed.

The General took leave and retired, and Hamilton also returned to his quarters. Not many minutes later Colonel Heyward was ushered into Lord Hertford's presence. There was a flush on his cheek, a flash in his dark eyes, that told of mingled triumph, doubt, perplexity, and uneasiness; and he glanced eagerly towards the Marquis as he entered, probably to decide the extent of his displeasure.

Hertford slowly lifted his eyes from the parchments he was perusing, and fixed them upon the young soldier. He read his feelings at a glance, and knew that the dread of having offended him was by far the most prominent among them. The last spark of anger died away as he looked, and his tone was grave rather than stern; the commander was forgotten in the friend. Still his promise to Middleton recurred to him.

'Well, Colonel,' he said gravely, 'what am I to say to you?'

Ernest coloured, but remained silent. Then the whole truth flashed upon him, and he answered ingenuously:

'Indeed, my lord, I fear I have committed a sad indiscretion.'

'That is a mild way of putting it,' said Lord Hertford very gravely. 'Your uncle would tell you that it was direct disobedience.'

'I am really very grieved, my lord.'

'You are very grieved, are you? That is an unexpected admission. Young men are but too glad to do as they please, and I think you have shown us that you are not an exception. You have incurred General Middleton's most serious displeasure.'

'I am aware that I have done wrong, my lord,' replied Ernest at once; 'but I trust you will believe that the offence was unintentional. I had full confidence in your lordship's intercession.'

'And even so you had received precise orders. You may be brave and loyal, Colonel Heyward, and you most certainly are so; but your discipline is of a most curious kind. Well, you have done what you liked, and must now look out for the consequences. I hear that you were successful.'

'We were, my lord.'

'And I have heard brave reports of your conduct ; but that I expected. Do not look so pained, Colonel ; I have no wish to be harsh, though in screening you I may sin against the duties of a general. We will say no more about it at present. I cannot, as I said before, help commending your courage, yet I believe I am acting in the wrong by giving you any commendation at all.'

'You are always kind, my lord,' replied Ernest.

'I cannot help being kind to you, Ernest, more's the pity,' said Lord Hertford, with a smile. 'I tell you that I wish you a little less valour or a little more judgment, that I might once in a way be either seriously angry with you, or never have occasion to be angry at all.'

'I hope it would be the second alternative,' replied Ernest, also with a smile.

'So do I, Colonel Heyward, most sincerely. And now listen. General Middleton would have referred you to a court-martial, which might involve you in difficulties ; for however many excuses your generals may find for you, a court-martial would probably be less lenient. I therefore warn and command you to absent yourself for the present from the society of your uncle, and to leave all the rest to my judgment.'

'I will do so, my lord, and thank you sincerely.'

'And now you may leave me, Colonel Heyward, and remember my warning. It is well for you that Seymour has not in this case interfered ; and it is well for you also that one of your commanders leans rather to clemency than otherwise. Now farewell for the present. I have duties to perform, and yours will not be the better for the delay they have sustained.'

'Pardon me, my lord, my duties were fulfilled, as far as was possible, before I asked permission to go.'

'Then you were wiser than I deemed you. *Au revoir*, Colonel.'

Ernest bowed and retired.

As the door closed, the expression of the Marquis's face suddenly relaxed from its sternness, and assumed a look at once

sad and thoughtful. He was sincerely attached to Ernest ; ~~t~~ reprimand him was painful, though he felt it to be expedient ~~t~~, but he was determined to shield him from all further consequences of his fault. He had earned a rebuke and received it. Here Hertford desired the affair to end.

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## CHAPTER XII.

‘I do think you might pardon him, and neither earth nor heaven grieve at the mercy.’ SHAKESPEARE.

A FEW days went by. Middleton was writing in his tent, or rather he had been so employed, and pens, ink, and paper still lay strewn before him ; but there was an expression of anxiety upon his brow and a restlessness in his eye that betokened a ruffled mind.

The Royalist army had marched further south, and on a clear day the General could distinguish in the distance the towers of Lord Leven’s castle, the present abode of the Lady Anne Middleton. Through all his continuous and important duties, through the risks and dangers of many previous campaigns and the hurry and confusion of the present, Middleton had never forgotten the affectionate anxiety of a wife many years younger than himself, and whenever he found himself in the vicinity of the castle, had been careful to send her due notice of his welfare. To Hargreaves, or to some other faithful dependent, had this duty been usually intrusted ; but at this period of our story their services had been claimed on matters of military importance, and Middleton found himself in a new and not easily to be solved perplexity.

Under ordinary circumstances the want could have been readily supplied, and Colonel Heyward, as the nephew of both, would have been a satisfactory and willing messenger. But Ernest was still in disgrace ; his uncle had forbidden him his presence, and until his offence should be condoned it was impossible to ask a favour at his hands. Middleton did not ask it, but

he sat fuming in his tent, his displeasure rather increasing than subsiding as time brought no solution to his problem.

Up to this time Colonel Heyward, secure in the friendship of Hertford, and supported by the unanimous verdict of his comrades, had found the temporary displeasure of his uncle a less heavy burden than he had at first anticipated. His duties were sufficient to engross his thoughts and pass away his time ; and though he would willingly have met his uncle's advances, he was prudent enough to abstain from an interview which might only have altered his position for the worse. It was not a state of affairs which could last, and now the General's known complexity seemed to offer the young Colonel an easy means of propitiation. Unwilling, however, a second time to offend him, by appearing unbidden before him, he had recourse to the advice and assistance of Lord Hertford, with what result we all shortly see.

It was still tolerably early in the day, and Middleton, who had written for advice to Hertford, was waiting impatiently for an answer, when a low tap at the door aroused him, and Colonel Heyward entered.

Without giving the General time to speak, Ernest at once stepped forward, and kneeling on one knee, took his uncle's hand in his and raised it to his lips ere Middleton had fully recovered from his surprise.

'Colonel Heyward !' he exclaimed at last ; but though the tones seemed hasty, there was a relenting look upon his features.

'The same, General,' replied Ernest ; 'the same, who takes advantage of this opportunity to ask his uncle's pardon, his commander's clemency, for an involuntary infringement of his mandate.'

'An *involuntary* infringement !' cried the General. Then, in his usual voice and manner, 'Well, rise, nephew, and inform me, if the past disobedience was unintentional, to what compulsion of motives I must assign the present. I believe that I forbid you to seek me.'

'Lord Hertford was aware of my intention,' said Ernest.

'Humph!' was the gracious answer. Then, after a pause, 'Well, what have you come for? I am full of perplexities and particularly busy: so I warn you, nephew, if you have any business to transact with me, to out with it at once, or postpone it *sine die*.'

He glanced earnestly at his nephew as he spoke. He was pleased with him in his heart for coming, although he would not have acknowledged it.

'I will choose the first alternative,' replied the Colonel. 'I came to offer you my service for the conveyance of your letter.'

'Heyday!' cried the General. 'Here's a knight-errant for you! Just what I was wishing to ask you, and should have done if you had not gone and got yourself into such a scrape. But who in the world informed you that I wanted a messenger?'

'In good truth that is nothing to wonder at, when the whole camp is full of it,' said Colonel Seymour, as he entered. 'Good-morrow, General Middleton.'

'For the third time to-day, Colonel Seymour,' said the General stiffly.

'But for the fear of contradicting you I would say the fourth,' retorted the Colonel, as he turned to Ernest. 'I am delighted to find *you* here, Colonel Heyward; and now that my stately cousin has followed on my heels, we shall make quite a pleasant little gathering.'

Lord Hertford, whose entrance had occasioned the latter portion of the speech, seemed hardly inclined to indorse the sentiment. He looked straight at Middleton, as though he would assure himself of the result of Ernest's interview. In his opinion the presence of Colonel Seymour was not, on the present occasion, a desirable addition to the party.

'At your service, Middleton. Seymour, I had fancied you on duty. Ernest Heyward, you have found your way here before me, I trust with success.'

'If not, let me add my intercession to that of the Commander's commander,' said his cousin.

'I am at a loss to understand you, sir,' said Middleton, with dignity.



Hertford made a movement in advance, but Seymour was too quick for him.

'Then Colonel Heyward is forgiven,' he said impetuously. 'Ernest, my dear fellow, I congratulate you.' Then lowering his voice, with a mischievous glance at Middleton, 'I see it is something to have uncles in high places after all.'

'Seymour,' began Ernest reproachfully.

His friend only laughed.

'O, perhaps it is only a delightful precedent. That would be better even than I thought,' he said gaily, unconscious of the storm that was surely, if slowly, gathering; and Hertford's warning, 'For Heaven's sake, Seymour, be silent!' perhaps only accelerated the danger.

Middleton sprang from his seat, and glared furiously at the three.

'You are mistaken,' he said presently; and his tones, calmer than of wont, were not less ominous on that account. 'Or,' he added, 'to speak correctly, gentlemen, it is *I* who have been mistaken; I had supposed that Colonel Heyward's offence might, on account of exceptional circumstances, have been harmlessly condoned without offering ground for accusations either of precedent or partiality. As, however, it has unhappily occasioned both, I beg to recall my previous decision, and refer the matter to the judgment of his grace, aided by a general court-martial. My Lord Hertford, may I request you to take charge of my nephew's sword? and Colonel Seymour will have the goodness to summon hither the Knight-Marshal.'

A dead silence supervened. Hertford, dismayed at the turn affairs had taken, stood stern and thoughtful. Seymour, shocked at the result of his imprudent words, would have given worlds to have recalled them. He was a good-hearted man, but his folly and want of tact were inconceivable.

'Colonel Heyward, you may give up your sword to me.'

The words came from General Middleton, and were instantly obeyed. Then, folding his arms, Ernest stood silently before him. The others looked on. Seymour was the first to speak.

'Under favour, General Middleton?'

'Under no favour, sir,' said the General sternly.

'Your decision sounds somewhat harsh. Your gallant nephew—'

'His grace will judge between us. Will you send for the Knight-Marshall as I desired you, sir, or must I go for him myself?'

'I don't care if you do,' was the inward retort; but Ernest with a hasty gesture, warned his friend to obey.

'It will be better for us both,' he whispered hurriedly.

The General caught the words.

'Colonel Heyward is brave,' he said angrily. 'It is to be hoped he will be as ready for the court to-morrow as he appears to be for the provost to-day.'

'A good soldier,' replied Ernest, 'fears nothing, save sin and dishonour.'

'He should fear *disgrace*, Colonel Heyward.'

'Not when it is undeserved,' said the young officer fearlessly.

'For goodness' sake, Ernest Heyward,' broke in Hertford 'do not anger the General further.'

'Not at all,' said Middleton coolly. 'He is only affording precedent for arguing with his superior officer.'

Ernest coloured and abstained from further remark. Seymour, having received another angry reminder from the General, condescended to obey his orders, but with a reluctance that for once was blent with a strong and not uncalled-for self-reproach. The position of the rest was meanwhile sufficiently embarrassing. No one attempted to speak. Ernest was, by the mere fact of his situation, constrained to silence; Hertford, thoughtful and anxious, stood briefly revolving in his mind the difficulties that every minute seemed accumulating. Middleton, harassed and angry, yet determined to carry the matter with a high hand, turned his back upon them both, and busied himself assiduously with his papers. Whilst matters were still in this unsatisfactory position, the door opened, and the Knight-Marshall, Sir Edward Sydenham, and Colonel Seymour entered the tent together. The latter officer, having acquitted himself of his ungracious errand, would most gladly have abstained from wit

nessing its result, had not a sense of manliness detained him. He could not but acknowledge that it was his indiscretion which had brought matters to this undesirable crisis; and such being the case, he considered it his duty at least to stand by his friend, even if he were of no material assistance to him.

Sir Edward saluted the General and Lord Hertford, and then gave a quick glance round the tent. Colonel Seymour had left him in doubt for what purpose his presence was required, and it was with considerable reluctance that he now drew his conclusions from the scene before him. Hertford looked grave and anxious; Middleton angry, but somewhat dignified; Ernest stood slightly apart, but save that his brow wore a sterner expression than usual, and that his sword, detached from his belt, lay at the feet of his uncle, there was nothing to mark him as the offender, though the practised eye of the Marshal at once perceived such to be the case. Before he could speak, however, Hertford advanced.

‘General Middleton—’

‘I will be at your service in five minutes, my lord. Meanwhile, Sir Edward—’

‘Forgive my interruption, General, but Sir Edward can wait an instant, and, by your leave, I cannot. I have considered this matter seriously, and I pray you to reflect before placing this young officer in a situation from whence you might find difficulty in extricating him with honour. His offence has been, to my mind, already condoned, as it certainly has already been rebuked. Here the affair should end. Brought under the notice of the Duke, it becomes a matter of publicity, and as such might be visited severely. At present it is private—between your nephew and yourself; or at least there are very few who have, so far, had any distinct cognisance of it. The verdict rests, therefore, with yourself. Consider,’ he resumed, after a momentary pause had drawn no concession from the General, ‘the good service he has so often rendered; contrast it with this one scarcely voluntary offence, and I am sure you will lean to mercy. Still inexorable? Then, General Middleton, I cease to intercede; but I ask you to remember

that, as your coadjutor no less than as your friend, I have more than once expressed my opinion on the subject. The onus now rests with you.'

Hertford drew aside as he spoke, and casting a look of grave regret on Ernest, prepared to let things take their course. *His* words had, however, some effect. Middleton seemed uneasy and undetermined, and it was with visible hesitation that he ordered the Marshal to place Colonel Heyward under arrest.

Sydenham bowed deferentially to the General, then turned to Ernest. Seymour stepped between them.

'This is too bad?' he exclaimed. 'General, you surely cannot mean it?'

'Colonel Seymour, if you behave in this way to-morrow, I shall arrest *you* for mutiny. I must beg you to allow Sir Edward Sydenham to perform his duty.'

But the Knight-Marshal still lingered, either in doubt of the General's decision, or in the good-natured hope that the delay might be of advantage to the prisoner. Catching Middleton's eye he found himself obliged either to speak or to retire. He chose the first.

'Is it your pleasure, then, General, that I take Colonel Heyward under arrest?' he asked slowly and distinctly, as if he intended the fact to be deeply impressed on the mind of his hearers. 'And also that, under sanction of his grace, a court-martial be convened for the trial of the same to-morrow?'

'Such is my desire,' said the General, laying down his pen in some surprise. In the strict Covenanting army he had never been asked to repeat his commands.

Sir Edward was fain to retire, when Hertford spoke earnestly:

'It is not too late to revoke *this* sentence, General, but that of a court-martial is irrevocable.'

'If Colonel Heyward be truly innocent, he has no cause to fear it.'

'It might easily be a harsh one,' said Hertford.

'And a *just* one. We waste time, gentlemen.'

'You should consider, General,' said Seymour, 'that there

is a difference between an intentional disobedience and a little harmless impetuosity.'

'The court will be most careful in defining that difference,' said the General coldly. 'Sir Edward, have you anything further to advance?'

'I cannot believe,' said Sir Edward respectfully, 'that Colonel Heyward, whom we know to be so brave and zealous, could willingly have gone astray from his duty.'

'It is really a most singular thing,' said General Middleton, 'that you all take part with my nephew except myself.'

'It is precisely because he is your nephew, and not ours, that you hold it so necessary to be strict with him,' said Hertford presently. 'But much as I abhor partiality, General, is it not possible to carry one's scruples too far?'

The General seemed slightly staggered by the last remark.

'I wish I could think with you,' he said. Then he was silent, and another interval of suspense succeeded. It was a curious scene throughout. The affection of a kinsman and the authority of a general had been already warring with each other in the breast of Middleton; but whilst the influence of Lord Hertford was a powerful auxiliary to Ernest, pride, obstinacy, and irritation at the interference of Seymour weighed down the opposite scale and kept the balance even. Seymour had now wisely retired into the background; Hertford, on the contrary, was firm in his opinion. Sir Edward seemed ready to support him; and if Ernest himself made no effort to regain his uncle's good graces, he had ceased to incense him with protestations or argument. It was to him Middleton looked as he reflected on his verdict. He remembered that Ernest was young, therefore wilful, rash too, and impetuous. He did not believe in his heart that the offence was intended; and if not, had it not already been sufficiently atoned for? He knew the proud sensitive nature with which he had to deal, and felt that the suspense and anxiety of his present position must alone have been very painful. Moreover, as Middleton felt with some compunction, it was less the offence which his nephew had committed than the interference of Colonel Seymour that had so

seriously angered him ; and putting things at their worst, the intercession of so many brave officers was a powerful incentive in his favour. He was already considering if it were possible to withdraw with dignity from his position, when two other voices were added to the discussion by the entrance of Colonel Stafford and Major Hurst, both at that time on his staff.

The General turned hastily towards them.

‘Good-morrow, gentlemen. Your presence could not have been timed more happily.’

‘We are entirely at your service, General,’ said Stafford courteously. ‘But what do I see—Colonel Heyward !’

‘We were considering of a court-martial, gentlemen,’ said the General nervously. ‘My nephew, as you perceive, is the offender.’ And with a few brief words he laid the particulars of the affair before them.

Colonel Stafford looked surprised.

‘I had heard of the offence,’ he said gravely ; ‘but I imagined that it had been forgiven.’

‘Circumstances have occurred,’ replied the General, ‘which this morning induced me to reconsider the matter, and even, as you perceive, to discuss the wisdom of bringing the affair under the jurisdiction of his grace. My Lord Hertford, however, and Sir Edward Sydenham are of different opinion.’

‘And you wish us—’

‘To throw your vote into the scale, gentlemen, and so bring the discussion to an end. Major Hurst has not spoken. Let us have his opinion also.’

A peculiar expression passed over the Major’s face before he spoke. Of all the votes that could have been called for on Ernest’s behalf, his was the least likely to be favourable. In the first place, his nature, harsh and suspicious to a degree, was unlikely to construe leniently a case over which the least shadow of uncertainty could be thrown ; in the second place, he cordially disliked Colonel Heyward. There had been no open quarrel between them ; a slight difference of opinion, in which Ernest had been victorious, had been succeeded by a coolness, which had been considerably increased by his unexpected promotion

meley—a post which the ambition of Hurst had for aspired to on his own account. He now hailed with occasion when his malice might be gratified, if not in uring of the General's present harsh decision, at least longation of an interview so mortifying to the pride  
L

opinion would carry more weight,' he said coldly, allowed a brief converse with the officer in question.'

looked up surprised; Middleton bent his head in t it was Stafford who formally opened the interroga-

ael Heyward,' he said, gravely but respectfully, 'it General's good pleasure that we investigate with him and circumstance of the offence wherewith you are ith a view of bringing it before the Duke or of sum- missing it, may it please you to answer clearly and the few questions which we shall put to you for the erstanding of the case?'

bowed.

the circumstances in which I am placed at present, it would be useless as well as ungracious to refuse with your request; and I shall therefore be willing as clearly and distinctly as you can wish, any and tion which I conceive not derogatory to my honour.' enough, any way,' muttered Major Hurst. 'Allow first place, Colonel Heyward, to place before you a of your case, as I have received it from the General. rrect me if wrong.'

bowed.

pears that on the 21st of this month,' continued olonel Hamilton being delayed on a foraging party, evil being apprehended, you were desirous of heading and applied for permission to General Middleton. est being denied, you solicited Lord Hertford to the General, and urge upon him a reconsideration of . His lordship consented, and desired you to prepare tie, and *await his return.*'

'Just so, Major Hurst,' replied the Colonel.

'Lord Hertford, having failed in his mission, returned at once to your tent. He found that you had already started, in direct defiance to your General's commands. Was this so?'

'Not exactly, sir.'

'You will observe, gentlemen,' said Hurst dryly, 'that you were on the point of committing an innocent man. It appears that Colonel Heyward never headed the sortie.'

'I did not say that. I merely objected as to the form in which the question was conveyed, and which accused me of having left in direct defiance to orders.'

'It is all the same thing,' said Hurst.'

'Not quite,' remarked Stafford. 'We are anxious to find out, not whether the expedition was taken out or not—we are, unhappily, aware that it was. We have only to inquire as to what were the motives, and in what consist the excuses, which led Colonel Heyward to that course of conduct. In the one case he would be guilty of a serious offence; in the latter of a simple indiscretion, which it would be wholly unnecessary to bring before the Duke. May I ask you,' he added, turning to the young officer, 'did Lord Hertford give any hopes of being successful in his mission?'

'The very greatest,' replied Ernest, without hesitation; 'amounting, indeed, well-nigh to certainty.'

'You may note that reply, gentlemen,' said Stafford.

'Lord Hertford,' said Major Hurst, 'is Colonel Heyward's statement correct?'

'Do you doubt my word, Major Hurst?' said the young officer haughtily. 'In that case I decline to answer any further questions.'

It was Hurst's ungenerous purpose, by innuendoes and otherwise, either to throw a false colouring on the facts which presented themselves, or, failing in this, to extort from the young Colonel such retorts as might further exasperate his uncle. Up to this time he had been foiled by the coolness and self-possession of the prisoner; and although the flashing eye and heightened colour had been proof that his words had not



been lost upon him, Ernest was too much pained by his uncle's displeasure, too harassed by the uncertainty of his position, which became every moment more distressing, to care much for the assumption of a man for whom he had neither affection nor esteem. That this man could, however, bring his malice and his jealousy into such an occasion as the present, it would have been hard even now to convince him. His indignant reply was at once turned to account by his foe.

'I am to understand then that, fearing to commit yourself further by answering, you wish the law to take its course?'

'Good heavens, Major Hurst!' cried Stafford angrily, 'you forget—'

'It is Colonel Heyward who forgets himself,' said Hurst slowly. 'Lord Hertford has not yet answered my question.'

'I have been silent from astonishment, Major Hurst. Nevertheless, you shall have my answer. I assure you, gentlemen, that had I foreseen for a moment the possibility of a refusal, I should neither have spoken as I did to Colonel Heyward, nor wasted my time in a vain errand to the General. I hope you are satisfied, Major Hurst. Colonel Stafford, though so many years your senior, has, I perceive, more indulgence for the impatience of youth than you have.'

Major Hurst bowed stiffly.

'Colonel Heyward,' he said, 'may I ask one further question? How long did you await Lord Hertford's return?'

'It was not quite an hour,' replied Ernest, after a pause.

'Not an hour?' resumed Hurst. 'That was small space in which to walk half a mile and to negotiate such a question. This throws some light upon the subject. What reasons induced you to set out at last?'

'The fear that by waiting the expedition would be vain.'

'Or the fear that Lord Hertford's return would prevent it altogether?'

'No, sir,' said Ernest indignantly. 'I had no doubt of his success.'

'And you think you did right, Colonel Heyward?' said Stafford somewhat gravely.

'I did think so *then*,' replied Ernest.

'And *now*?' asked Major Hurst.

'I perceive I was mistaken.'

'Then you plead guilty?'

'No such thing,' cried Stafford. 'Hurst, how *can* you?'

'I am merely arranging the Colonel's own words in a *more* compact and intelligible form,' said Major Hurst firmly. 'I believe such was their import.'

'Have you any further questions to ask, Major Hurst?' said General Middleton.

'None, I believe, General.'

'Then prepare the verdict. Is Colonel Heyward proved guilty or not of direct and deliberate defiance to my orders? That is the charge to you. Nay, you need not retire. There is division? Each separately, then. Lord Hertford?'

'Not guilty.'

'Colonel Stafford; Sir Edward?'

'We are both of the same opinion.'

'Major Hurst, you are silent. You believe the Colonel guilty?'

'I *do*, General.'

'Of direct and deliberate defiance?' said Lord Hertford.

'I *do*, my lord.'

'And you, Seymour?' said the General.

'I believe him to be perfectly guiltless of all and everything, save a too great eagerness for the good of his cause,' was the warm answer.

'And this exploit?'

'Was rash—rash in the extreme, but no worse,' said Hertford firmly.

'What is to be done, then?' said Middleton nervously.

'Will a majority suffice; or must it, in the divided state of opinion, be still submitted to the Duke?'

'Considering the great disproportion of the votes, there can be no difficulty in accepting the verdict of the majority,' said Lord Hertford.

'It would be *safest*,' said Hurst.

'The circumstances of the case, and the general high character of this young officer, seem quite to justify our acceptance of Lord Hertford's opinion,' said Colonel Stafford.

'The opinion of so distinguished an officer is of itself quite sufficient,' said the General courteously. 'We will consider this affair at an end. But listen,' he added, as he laid his hand on his young kinsman's shoulder, 'if we have been harsh, let it be a lesson for the future; and should I again stand between you and your courtship of danger, remember that it is as safe, and in the end quite as pleasant, to *think* before you *act*.'

Lord Hertford here approached, and taking up the sword, placed it in the young Colonel's hand.

'It has been so bravely wielded, and has been of such service to our cause, that I cannot but rejoice at its speedy restoration,' he said gravely. 'But your courage must be tempered with prudence and discretion, would you have it of real use to your comrades and otherwise than dangerous to yourself.'

'You have had a narrow escape even now,' said General Middleton; 'but for once we will let you off. Gentlemen, I believe that our business is concluded.'

'One moment,' said Ernest hastily.

'Well,' said the General, surprised, 'what do you want with us now?'

'Only this, General. I would know if my innocence be fully established; or if I am only "let off" at the entreaty of these gentlemen?'

'And pray what difference can that possibly make?' said the General.

'The very greatest,' replied Ernest; 'as in the latter case I should have some difficulty in accepting your decision.'

'Do you hear *this*, gentlemen?' said the General.

'I think your nephew shows considerable spirit,' said Stafford.

Hertford shrugged his shoulders.

'The foolish boy cannot let well alone,' he muttered. Then aloud, 'I believe, General, we may safely assure Colonel Heyward that his innocence is made clear to all.'

'Save one,' said Major Hurst.

'And that is—?' said Colonel Heyward.

'Myself,' replied the Major. He paused, then added slowly, 'Our prior acquaintance has convinced me that Colonel Heyward prefers his own inclinations to the advice of his elders.'

At that instant the remembrance of their past resentment returned like a flash of light to the mind of our hero, and for the first time he fully realised the ungenerous motives and malicious intentions of his rival.

'And I, Major Hurst,' he replied, with imprudent bitterness, 'believed you, in spite of that acquaintance, the man of honour and integrity which I now fear you are not.'

Passion, rage, indignation nearly choked Major Hurst. He laid his hand on his sword, but could not reply.

'No violence,' said Sir Edward, stepping suddenly between them. 'Remember in whose presence you stand, gentlemen.'

'Were it in the Royal Court I would have satisfaction for this!' cried Major Hurst.

'I shall be happy to give you satisfaction at any hour you name, Major Hurst,' said the Colonel haughtily.

'I shall wait upon you accordingly, Colonel Heyward.'

'Gentlemen!' thundered the General, 'is this a fit place for your quarrels? Stand back, Ernest Heyward, and speak again at your peril! Major Hurst, has anything passed between you and my nephew? No answer. Then I must necessarily conclude that there is something. Colonel Heyward, has anything occurred between you and this officer previous to this morning?'

'Nothing that I could have conceived would have called forth his animus on an occasion like this,' said Ernest, very quietly.

'Then something has occurred, Major Hurst.'

Ernest stepped forward.

'If you would allow us to settle it between us—' he began.

'I shall allow nothing of the kind, Colonel Heyward. Major Hurst, your evidence is prejudiced. My nephew may therefore consider himself completely acquitted. Gentlemen,

you may retire ; and remember you are strictly recommended to keep the peace.'

The officers bowed and retired ; all except Hertford and Ernest ; they were detained by the General, who now asked the latter if he would still take the letter.

'I shall be most willing to do so,' said Ernest, at once. 'I have finished my duties and can start directly.'

'Well, you do not bear malice, which is all as it should be,' said Middleton, smiling. 'There is my note, nephew, and you must bring me an answer. *Au revoir*.'

Ernest bowed ; and Middleton extending his hand, he raised it to his lips, and grasping Lord Hertford's warmly in his own, left the tent to prepare for his expedition.

Hertford soon followed. Seymour was waiting for him outside, and congratulated him heartily on the successful issue of the affair. Hertford received him coldly, and answered with a stern rebuke.

'It's no use, Hertford,' said Seymour, laughing, when he had listened for about a minute. 'You have favoured me with your lectures a thousand times before. I act only with the very best intentions, and shall therefore continue always to do so.'

'Very well,' replied Hertford. 'But let me inform you that your very best intentions only harm your friends. Colonel Heyward has suffered much annoyance, and, but for me, would have been actually arrested, only on account of your unpardonable interference. He is brave and loyal and true-hearted, and one whose friendship you should value. See that you do not ruin him by your folly.' And turning abruptly from him, he walked slowly in the direction of his quarters.

## CHAPTER XIII.

'A gracious woman, whose reserve denies  
The power to utter what consumes her heart.'

WOOLMER.

IN a spacious apartment of his fine old castle sat the Earl of Leven, Alexander Leslie. He was an old man, and his deeply-furrowed brow spoke of hard struggles in foreign lands as well as in his own. His life had been an eventful one. Born in a comparatively tranquil and private sphere, as the son of Captain George Leslie of Balgovie, he had early embraced the military profession, and had served with some distinction in Holland under Gustavus Adolphus, who had promoted him to the rank of lieutenant-general, and finally created him a field-marshal.

His conduct in the defence of Stralsund against Wallenstein, and later in that of the Isle of Rugen, surrounded his name with a new halo of victory; and when the death of Gustavus rendered his presence in Sweden unnecessary he was recalled to Scotland by the Covenanters to take the chief command against the King. He took the Castle of Edinburgh by assault, without the loss of one man, and then marched against King Charles. His army was strict in discipline and rigid in religious observances. The soldiers were summoned to sermons by the beat of drums, and at sunrise and sunset the camp resounded with psalms and canticles, whilst their blue banners were adorned with the arms of Scotland in gold, and pharisaical protestations to the righteousness of their cause. In person Leslie was small and slightly deformed, but he was a vigilant, skilled, and experienced general. To him the King surrendered at Newark.

He had been writing, but his task was now finished, and pushing aside pen and parchment he paced the room with a quick firm step, as unhesitating and as soldier-like as in his youth. Half an hour passed away. He opened the casement and looked out into the surrounding country. The rich green

tints of early summer were clothing bank and brae, and the air as it wafted into the room was full of fragrance. But the old man did not heed it—he had no sympathy now with the young beauty of nature; he had once, perhaps, but it was half a century ago. His summer, his autumn too, were long past; his tastes had been chilled and blighted by the snows of an untimely winter; and his heart, deprived of most of its once prized treasures, concentrated its dying affections in the soldier's restless ambition.

He pushed aside with an impatient gesture the long green branches of ivy, and looked out into the garden. It was very quiet. The birds sang, and the breeze swept by, and the leaves rustled gently, and the green grass was heavy with a recent shower; but there were no footsteps on the broad walk, no accents in the dark pine grove, no ringing laughter echoing among the distant bushes, and he sighed; for children's voices, children's footsteps had once been heard there. Poor man! it was all silent now. Suddenly a thought seemed to strike him, and turning abruptly he rang the bell with a peal that summoned the servant in haste to the apartment. Yet the peal was not an angry one. There was dignity even in his hastiness. It spoke volumes to the acute observer, as did his most trivial action. The man who had learnt his lesson of life under the rule of Gustavus Adolphus, who had commanded proud armies, and had asserted, even before royalty, his uncompromising devotion to his cause, commanded as a soldier should command, as he would have obeyed as a soldier must obey.

'Request Lady Anne Middleton to honour me with her presence.'

The servant retired.

Lord Leven drew two chairs to the window, and proceeded to occupy one himself. In a few moments a slow step was heard, and a lady entered.

Cold, dignified, and indescribably haughty in manner, the lady Anne Middleton was, in many ways, a feminine reproduction of her father. The last and only surviving of many children, she most perfectly resembled him, partaking alike of

his virtues and his faults. Full forty summers had at this time passed over her, scarcely impairing the smallest even of her charms, but adding, as time went on, new stateliness to her figure, new haughtiness to her heart. The snowy locks that shaded her father's brow were, in her, exchanged for a glossy and almost purple blackness ; and her eyes, large, lustrous, and darkly beautiful, softened at times to an expression of womanly tenderness, that banished for the moment all trace of her usual queenliness and pride. As Mistress Anne Leslie of Balgovie she had been the acknowledged beauty of the Scottish capital ; but it was less the loveliness of her person than the noble qualities of her mind that had captivated the impetuous warm-hearted Middleton, then well-nigh as old as her father. She had married him to escape from a home that was distasteful, from a hearth that was desolate ; her father was ever in the council or the battle-field, and her brothers and sisters were scattered and gone. She married, and again she was desolate, for Sir Thomas Middleton was a soldier also.

At first, indeed, their partings, if frequent, had been also brief, but as time went on they became more and more lengthened. For the last five years they had been almost continual. Other sorrows and anxieties disturbed the happiness of her home, and at length, when the engagement was begun and Middleton left the Parliament for the King, she bade adieu to a spot saddened by the recollection of past joys and hallowed by many a bereavement, and took up her residence in Lord Leven's castle, to be again, as in her neglected girlhood, the proud and stately mistress of her father's household. But cold as many people fancied her, as even her own father found her, she was less so than she seemed. Her character had been early chilled by solitude and neglect, and the tenderness which still lingered there was mostly hidden out of sight. She was reserved even with her nearest and dearest, with her children, her father, and her husband ; and the latter was, perhaps, the only one who understood her, and better by her letters than by their life together. The very difference of their natures was another tie between them, as the likeness between the father



daughter had been but another barrier to part them ; was cold and haughty and reserved, and it was only as she felt that their love for each other could be guessed.

On the present occasion one quick glance from Lord Leven told him that his daughter had intrenched herself behind a wall of hauteur and reserve, which it was in vain for him to overthrow. Once in her life Lady Anne had unfolded to him her secret feelings ; they had been misunderstood, and he had withdrawn them from his view for ever. Lord Leven was accustomed to these moods, but their frequent occurrence had not taught him how to meet them. Had General Leven been there the barriers of reserve would have been melted by his warmth and *empressement* ; but Lord Leven was not the General, and so they remained as they were. He rose from his chair, and advancing to meet her, kissed the pale forehead of his daughter as she stood before him. She bowed. It was a promising beginning, and as Lord Leven retreated to the door and threw open the window to relieve his embarrassment, he thought crossed his mind that a forlorn hope, or a desperate struggle with the foe, would be more to his taste than a prolonged tête-à-tête with the queenly Lady Anne. She turned, her delicate hands pressed tightly together, and her eyes fixed inquiringly on his face.

'What for you, Anne,' he said at length, 'as I thought you might have heard from the General.'

'Dear father, when have I ever heard from my husband or when have you been so uninformed of the fact ?' she asked.

'No, no ; I don't think you have, my dear,' he replied. 'There is no reason why you should have sent to me at this time whatever, especially as we do not think quite alike,' he said boldly.

'I have not heard from him,' she repeated.

'I think, then, my dear, that you *ought* to have heard from Middleton should most certainly have written.'

'My daughter's eyes flashed at this implied reproach to her mother, but she answered very calmly,

'It is not so unreasonable as to expect him to write in the

hurry and confusion of his present duties.' But Lady Anne had expected a letter, and it was disappointment as well as reserve that had clouded her brow that morning.

'There should be no confusion,' said her father at once. 'There was not when Middleton and I served together. There was no such thing as confusion in the army of Gustav Adolphus when I had the honour of serving under his banner. Why, think of the siege of Frankfort, my love, when the plague was in the town, and the men dying by scores, and Hamillon and Gustavus at daggers drawn besides; even then the troops were not in confusion. A pretty army the King has to boast of.'

'General Middleton has other things to think of besides writing to his wife. The Duke himself has scarcely more responsibility.'

'My dear, I am glad to find you so reasonable,' said Lord Leven, who was singularly deficient in tact, and had no idea how he was fretting the proud spirit of his daughter. 'When you were young, women were not wont to take things so coolly.'

'Did *you* write to me so often when you were in peril and danger?' said his daughter, in a tone that was meant to be respectful, but failed, and was sarcastic.

'My dear, that was different,' said the Earl, conscious that the reproach was deserved, yet vexed with Lady Anne for having uttered it. 'I hope I did not disturb you by sending for you, my dear.'

This was tantamount to telling her that she was a little put out, and she answered abruptly.

'I was writing,' she said.

'To your husband, my dear? That is well, that is well. I leave your part, my dear, and if he fail you can't help it. Don't get angry, Annie; it is good advice that I give you. And if you are writing to your husband you may tell him I have made up my mind *not* to join him.'

His daughter's brow clouded, but she repressed the answer that rose hurriedly to her lips. None mourned more than she did that her father had been one of those who had delivered up the King to the English. Fain would she have

now seen him redeem his loyalty and his honour under Hamilton's banner, but the day had not yet come for that.

'My letter is not to my husband,' she said; 'I always write to him by his own messenger. I am writing to the Countess of Balcarres, whose husband is now colonel of horse in Fifeshire for his Majesty.' She looked earnestly at her father as she said this. She would have implored him on her knees to follow the example of his friend, but Leven had asserted his great age and infirmities as his reason for refusing the Engagement, and she read in his face that entreaties would be vain. She turned as though to leave him.

'Are you going, Anne?' he said more gently. 'I wish you would not be so secluded, my daughter.'

'I did not know you wanted me,' she said, her voice low and almost sad. 'I will stay then, father.'

'Thank you, my dear,' and with a momentary impulse of affection he bent forward and kissed her brow. A glow, half of surprise, half of pleasure, flushed her cheek for an instant; and then, as he resumed his seat, she came and knelt beside him, as she had not done for many a long year. She was still with him, when a servant entered and advanced towards her.

'A Cavalier requests admission to your ladyship's presence.'

'Admit him,' she replied coldly; and presently another step was heard in the gallery, and a stranger entered—a stranger to Lord Leven and to his daughter, but not to us. He advanced respectfully, and courteously saluting both, placed a letter in the hands of Lady Anne. A faint colour rose on her cheek and her eyes softened as she gazed upon it, for seal and handwriting were well known, well loved. She tore it open, glanced hurriedly down its pages, then, lifting her eyes to the face of the bearer, she exclaimed:

'My husband's nephew, I perceive. You are welcome, Ernest.'

Poor woman! She sighed deeply as she pronounced his name, softly and slowly, lingering with a melancholy pleasure on the word; for he whom she had lost the last, and loved the most of all her children, had borne that name. The moment's

emotion passed, the tear that had trembled in her eye was arrested in its course, and then, quietly and calmly, she extended her hand to Ernest, and suffered him to raise it to his lips.

Her greeting seemed so much more like that of a queen to her subjects than that of an aunt to her nephew that Lord Leven, a silent spectator of the scene, could scarcely forbear a smile; but he bowed courteously as the young officer was introduced to him, and engaged him in a brief conversation, while his daughter finished reading her letter.

It was a short and somewhat hasty one, but as she folded it and replaced it in its covering a tear fell from her eye, and she pressed it fervently to her lips; as she did so Ernest turned towards her, and their eyes met.

'Forgive a moment's weakness, Ernest,' she said coldly, and the colour rushed to her cheeks, as though ashamed at the unusual feeling. 'It is past, and I am once more myself.'

Ernest's answering glance was full of sympathy. He had had a glance of her true nature undesignedly unveiled to him, and if he loved her before for her husband's sake, he now loved her for herself.

'Is the General near here?' she asked abruptly.

'Within twenty miles, madam. I am charged to convey to him your reply.'

'It is well,' she replied haughtily. Then, as her father left them, she continued, 'And why did he send *you*, Ernest? he has not done so before.'

'To pay my respects to you in person, madam, and in order that you might be more perfectly informed of all that regarded him.'

'I am glad to see you,' she answered,—'glad for the sake of your mother, who was almost as a sister to me. Ah,' she added, eyes and voice again softening, as she fixed her searching glance upon his face, as though to trace in his manly features the beauty of his departed mother, 'how like you are to her in face! May you be true to the cause which she loved!'

'I shall strive to be so,' he replied earnestly. 'And under

general as the Duke of Hamilton it were strange should I  
wise.'

; *many* have fallen away from as bright examples,'  
laimed bitterly. 'But you, Ernest, prove loyal to your  
hough you should fall and die with him.'

will indeed, madam,' he said earnestly; 'and fear not  
oyalty; for those who are of my faith know not how to  
heir King.'

they say,' she replied, 'and on bended knee do I pray  
may be so. But you are young, Ernest Heyward, though,  
speaks truly, you do not want for valour. Alas, my  
young and brave, and he is gone, gone for ever !'

turned away her head as she spoke, and Ernest again  
her with respectful sympathy. The next question  
him with its abruptness :

rd Hertford is with you, is he not ?

is, madam,' replied the young Cavalier, with an accent  
surprise.

u know him, probably ?

imately, though so much my superior, both in age and  
ice. I have always found in him a true friend, and re-  
from the very commencement of my acquaintance with  
most paternal kindness at his hands.'

may well be kind to you, Ernest,' said Lady Anne  
'for your own sake ; but Hertford has yet a deeper and  
ason for his friendship, for deeply, truly, and devotedly  
l your mother.'

st started.

mother !' he repeated.

ur mother, Edith Cameron, my husband's niece, and my

He met her at her uncle's house, courted, and lost her.  
rs later she married another. They never met from that

st was about to speak, when Lord Leven reëntered the  
and Lady Anne rose from her seat, her brow calm but  
r eyes tearless but softened, her manner stately as

The letters were at last written, and Ernest went. The same dignity, the same reserve blent in his aunt's farewell that had mingled in her greeting; but Ernest understood her now. He had paid his first, his last visit, it might be, to Lord Leven's castle, to his aunt's home. He had looked upon its towers once and for ever; but he had left behind him his remembrance, and raised up another anxious heart to plead for him with Heaven through his riskful and eventful life.

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#### CHAPTER XIV.

'Up rose the sun; the mists uncurl'd  
Back from the solitary world.' BYRON.

It was at a late hour that Ernest, having accomplished his mission, returned to the camp. Many times already he had been startled by the sudden *Qui vive?* of the sentinel, and as many times had given the password, with which the foresight of Hertford had provided him. He had not loitered on the way, but as he neared the camp, the pale stars gleaming one by one in the fast darkening sky warned him that his message to Middleton must be deferred until the following day. He hurried on, but though, when he reached the camp, he glanced more than once in the direction of the General's quarters, the complete silence and darkness of everything decided him, and he proceeded directly to his tent. Having confided his horse to a sergeant, he received the intelligence that a guest was awaiting him within.

He was a man of middle age, tall and stout, of not unprepossessing appearance, but of cold heartless manner. Ernest was but slightly acquainted with him. He rose as Colonel Heyward entered, and briefly apologised for his intrusion.

'May I venture to ask the reason of Major Houghton's somewhat untimely visit?' asked Ernest, softening the words with a frank smile.

'It is, I am afraid, an unpleasant one. I am here on behalf of Major Hurst.'

'Then I understand you,' said Ernest. 'I shall have great pleasure in accepting his challenge. At what hour?'

'Six o'clock to-morrow morning.'

'And the rendezvous?'

'Outside the camp, at the Three Oaks.'

'Pistols, I presume?'

'Exactly, Colonel Heyward.'

'You are Major Hurst's second?'

'No, Colonel, I am not. I do but undertake to deliver the challenge in default of the proper person, who was unable to wait on you. Major Hurst's second is Colonel Seymour.'

'Colonel Seymour!' exclaimed Ernest.'

'Yes, sir. He wished me to assure you that, in accepting that position, he did it with the best intentions.'

'I have no doubt of it,' said the Colonel.

'He hopes you will not consider it necessary to include him in your enmity on that account.'

'I have no intention of doing so.'

'Thank you, Colonel; he will feel himself, no doubt, on the best of terms with you as well before as after. He esteems you one of his particular friends.'

'So it appears, sir,' said the Colonel.

'And you, sir, have you any one in view whose services you can rely on in a case like the present?'

'I shall, no doubt, be able to find some one, Major Houghton, although at the present moment they may be difficult of access.'

'Colonel Hamilton will, I make sure—'

'In case he should not be forthcoming, Colonel Heyward, I need not say that I shall be happy to offer you any aid in my power. It is rather contrary to rule, I believe, but my services—'

'I shall be equally happy to accept them,' said Ernest.

'I may count on you, then?'

'You may, Colonel Heyward. You will be at the Three Oaks by six?'

'You may depend on my punctuality.'

'I believe, then, that my mission is for the present fulfilled. I take my leave, Colonel.'

The two officers bowed gravely, then shook hands, and parted, the Major returning to his friends, and Ernest to tent, to meditate on the varied events of the day, and the equally exciting rencontre of the morrow.

For some moments he remained in deep and painful thought. The situation in which he now found himself was one not only new to him, but was every way opposed to his character and inclinations. With a mind too well regulated to be prone to anger, and a nature too kind-hearted willingly to offend, his camp life had been altogether free from those affairs of honour in which, despite the most rigid enactments, the other Cavaliers were sometimes wont to distinguish themselves. He shrank from shedding the blood of another in a private and, as he conceived, causeless quarrel; yet a feeling of proud indignation and a sense of injured honour proved weighty considerations in the mind of the young Colonel. His word too was given—hastily, but irrevocably; and drawing near the table, he seized the pen and wrote two letters, one to his uncle, enclosing that of Lady Anne; the other—over which he spent far more time—when his pen trembled with controlled emotion, his feelings expended themselves in words of passionate affection, and which at last he left unfinished—to Alice, to his wife.

More than once he seized the paper and pressed it to his lips, as if to accompany with a parting kiss his last farewell, perchance, to her he so loved; but even as he did so a crowd of thoughts rushed on his mind; a voice, speaking sternly in his ear, asked him again and again what he was about to do; while to his excited fancy the sweet face of Alice seemed to come almost bodily before him, asking him what right he had to risk, for mere point of honour, a life on which so much depended.

Ernest was a very young man, and the struggle was a hard one. Brought up in solitude, with no wise hand to guide him, transplanted in his youth to a camp, where honour and glory seemed paramount over all, where courage alone was admired



**and** danger ever courted, can we wonder that he, in the pride **and** enthusiasm of his nature, in the quick untrained feelings of **his** early manhood, listened to the voice of the age, and silenced, **at** least in part, the 'still small voice' within him? And yet **he** mused, wrote, reflected, till the midnight was long past, and **the** first gray light of morning stole through his tent.

The sun had not far risen above the horizon when Ernest, **having** compromised matters with his conscience, left his tent **and** proceeded to the rendezvous. Silently he retraced his steps **of** the preceding night, and half started as he recognised many **a** bush and hedge and tree that he had then noticed, when with **a** light heart he had wended his way among them, eager to **return** and present himself and his letters to his uncle. His **step** now was firm and rapid; his brow, though grave, was **unclouded**; and if a deeper thought was stamped upon his **features**, his eyes flashed alike with courage and decision. He **had** not gone far when he met Major Houghton, who joined **him**.

'Good-morning, Colonel Heyward. You are a punctual **riser**, I perceive.'

'Pretty well,' returned Ernest indifferently. 'Are our **friends** as much so?'

'That we shall see,' replied the Major. 'I should fancy **Major** Hurst would take care to be in time; but for Seymour I **cannot** answer.'

'It is well if Colonel Seymour does not let out the matter **to** the whole camp,' said the Colonel. 'I wonder at Major **Hurst** having chosen him for a second.'

'There was no choice, I believe, or I should have been **equally** ready to oblige him,' said the Major. 'Seymour had **wind** of his intentions, and this was the only way to bind him **in** honour. I hope you are a good shot, Colonel Heyward?'

Ernest started at the coolness of the tone and words, but did **not** answer, and they continued their way in silence. Major **Houghton** looked once or twice towards him. He read nothing **but** courage and decision in the proud calm features.

'You are a new hand at this kind of thing, I should

imagina, Colonel Heyward,' said Major Houghton, after a long pause.

'I am,' replied Ernest shortly. 'There is a beginning to everything, you know.'

'Yes, and an *end*,' said his friend calmly. 'I often wonder when Major Hurst will have an end put to his experience. Perhaps that honour is reserved for you.'

Another silence, which lasted until they reached the ground. It was a lovely spot, a small green hillock, standing like an oasis in the brown dark moor, and shaded from the now brilliant rays of the sun by a group of majestic oaks that lifted their gnarled trunks and light green foliage towards the sky, and swayed in the morning breeze, which blew stiffly from the east. Every blade and every leaf seemed radiant with a thousand colours, literally diamond-begemmed with the dew. Such a fairy scene of silent beauty that Ernest, as he glanced around, could scarce restrain his surprise at the strange taste which had chosen so much loveliness for a scene of bloodshed and perchance even of death.

'One might as well die in a paradise as in a desert,' said Major Houghton, in answer to Ernest's unexpressed thought; and as he spoke the two other Cavaliers made their appearance. Hurst, cold and stern, bowed stiffly to the Colonel, who returned the salutation much in the same way. Seymour, anxious and fidgety, scarcely looked at Ernest, but shook hands with Houghton, who coolly cut short the ceremony by hoping that they 'would make haste, as it was very cold standing.' Hurst's lip curled scornfully, an example which Ernest might have been tempted to imitate, had it proceeded from any other quarter. As it was he turned away, and leaving the two seconds to make the necessary arrangements, approached the three oak-trees which, from their peculiar size and beauty, had given their name to the spot. On the trunk of one there was a name rudely written, faintly too; but it brought a rush of colour into the young Colonel's cheek. The name, and yet not the name, of his fair young wife—*Elsie*!—the fond familiar title that was set to her; and now the same word met his eye, carved

perchance by some rustic shepherd, or by the rosy fingers of its peasant owner herself. It brought back a vision of his home, a picture of peaceful happiness, even more inappropriate to the scene before him than the light cold-hearted speeches of his second. His plans were, however, formed; and it was with a brow as calm, and a conscience clearer at least than those of his companions, that he turned once more towards them, as their final preparations were completed.

Major Houghton advanced.

'You have decided then, gentlemen,' said he, 'to settle your difference by force of arms?'

'We have,' replied the two officers simultaneously.

'Then no mediation or arrangement—'

'None whatever,' cried Major Hurst impatiently. Waving his hand, and advancing to the determined position, 'Colonel Heyward, the first fire is yours.'

There was a brief pause, and Ernest fired in the air.

'What do you mean by this, sir?' cried his opponent angrily.

'Simply that I have no intention of shedding the blood of a man who has yet neither given me any cause for esteeming him, nor a reasonable excuse for taking his life,' replied Ernest quietly. 'It is your turn, Major Hurst, if you will have it so.'

'And I have no such scruple,' cried Hurst. He fired, and Ernest fell.

Seymour and Major Houghton sprang forward to render assistance: the former, to do him justice, much concerned; the latter, perfectly calm and cold, seemed by every movement to show how perfectly accustomed he was to such scenes, and how little he regarded them. Major Hurst stood meanwhile grave and silent, but neither volunteered his assistance, nor expressed by either word or look the slightest tokens of regret. He gazed listlessly on the scene before him, when his attention was arrested by some officers approaching from the camp, and in a few moments Hertford, Claude Hamilton, and others arrived on the spot.

Hertford's first thoughts were those of a commander, Hamil-

ton's those of a friend ; he knelt beside Ernest and spoke to him, but received no answer.

'Is this well done, gentlemen?' cried the Marquis, as he gazed sternly on the group. 'Is *this* your duty to your King and to your country, to risk the best and noblest lives in a private quarrel? Gentlemen, I am ashamed of you.' Then, as Ernest opened his eyes with a faint sigh, and looked round him, he added gravely,

'This is your work, Major Hurst.'

'There is no serious damage,' said Major Houghton, who, with Hamilton and Seymour, had remained in close consultation with the surgeon. 'These gentlemen have been indulging in a slight feat of arms, in which, as you perceive, Major Hurst has had the advantage.'

'I am happy to assure you,' said Seymour satirically, 'that Major Hurst is not in the least the worse for his morning's work.'

'I wish he were,' muttered Hertford angrily ; 'it is of Colonel Heyward that I would inquire.'

'My principal,' said Houghton coolly, 'is in no present danger ; he has met with a slight accident, but will be quite ready to renew the quarrel, if your lordship thinks fit, on some future occasion.'

'I think,' said Colonel Hamilton, 'that as matters now stand these two gentlemen would do well to shake hands and end the matter.'

'If you think it will end *here*, gentlemen, you are mistaken,' said Hertford sternly.

'It is my principal's wish that no further notice may be taken,' said Houghton, rightly interpreting a sign from Ernest. 'If you are willing, gentlemen, we will now return to camp.'

Hertford haughtily assented. Then, as Major Hurst and his second (who had received a hint from the Marquis to that effect) retired from the scene, he leant for a moment over the young Colonel, who, partially recovered, was supported in the arms of Hamilton. A deep sigh escaped him, but he did not

speaking; and presently, after giving some rapid but disconnected orders for the conveyance of the wounded man to his tent, he turned abruptly away, and strode off in the direction of Middleton's quarters.

The General was reading some despatches from the Duke; but as the door opened he began:

'My dear nephew, what success?'

'It is I, General Middleton,' said Hertford gravely.

'You?' cried the General, abruptly rising. 'My dear Hertford, what on earth brings you here at this hour? I was expecting Colonel Heyward.'

'Colonel Heyward will not, I fear, be able to wait upon you just at present.'

'And wherefore not, my lord? He has returned.'

'He has,' replied his friend.

'Then why does he not come to me at once?' asked the General somewhat hotly. 'No fresh scrape, I suppose.'

'I fear that my intelligence is unpleasant. Your nephew—'

'Well!' said the General impatiently.

'Major Hurst—'

'Well, what of him?'

'These two officers—in fine, to come to the point at once, General Middleton, these two officers, having a difference, decided on settling it as men of honour.'

'And fought?' cried the General.

'And fought,' said Lord Hertford impressively.

'And my nephew?' cried Middleton, in sudden alarm; 'what of him?'

'He is wounded; but I trust not seriously,' said Hertford gravely. 'Nay, be not angry,' added he, as the General brought down his hand on the table with a violence that made everything tremble. 'From what I could hear, your nephew had some excuse; though as for Major Hurst—'

'I will have them both under arrest!' said the General.

'Not your nephew?'

'Yes, my nephew, Lord Hertford!' cried Middleton, in a passion.

'You would not imprison a dying man,' said the Marquis sternly.

'Dying!' cried the General, in a changed voice; 'you told me he was not seriously hurt.'

'I told you I trusted so,' said Hertford.

'And you can stand here and wait on that supposition. My lord,' cried the General, his voice trembling with agitation, 'you can come here and tell me that my nephew, who is dear as a son to me, the favourite son of Edith Heyward, is dying, or may be dying at this moment. Lord Hertford—'

The Marquis advanced and laid his hand upon his arm. 'I beg you to calm yourself, General. Your nephew, I hope on trust—'

'You hope and trust, my lord! Hope and trust will not do for me. Where is the boy? I will see him—do not detain me, my lord; I *will* see him!'

'Not whilst you are in this state, General,' said Hertford with firmness. 'Nothing but quiet—'

'Then I *will* be quiet,' said the General. 'I assure you you may depend on my self-possession.' Then suddenly, 'Ah, where is Major Hurst?'

'Probably in his tent, congratulating himself on his own safety,' said Hertford coldly; 'unless, indeed, Colonel Hamilton has called him out in behalf of his friend.'

'Colonel Hamilton!' cried the General, his attention for the moment diverted; 'was he there?—not second, I hope?'

'No, General; your nephew and Major Hurst were provided when the fact reached his ears. Colonel Seymour was on the Major's side.'

'He did not dare!' cried Middleton.

'I beg your pardon, General, but he certainly did. As we should have had cause to be grateful to him, had his truth been as great as his loquacity.'

'Indeed; and wherefore?'

'Only that, with his usual prudence and discretion, the Colonel *talked*.'

'And so gave you a hint?' cried the General.

‘Ay, a few broad ones. Important business—the Three Oaks—a pleasant rendezvous—the advantage of a walk before breakfast. If he had named six o’clock instead of half-past, we should have been there in time ; as it was—’

He was interrupted by the entrance of Colonel Hamilton. The General started forward, and grasped his hand.

‘My nephew!’ he said, in a broken voice.

‘Nay, General,’ said the Colonel, ‘there is, I hope, no need for alarm. I assure you he is at present in no danger whatever.’

‘Thank God!’ said Lord Hertford, with an accent of emotion.

The General sank into a seat, and covered his face with his hands. There was no mistaking his affection now. ‘Can I see him?’ he asked, after a short pause.

‘Not at present, I think,’ answered Colonel Hamilton. ‘He sends you his duty and this letter ; and begs that you will forgive Major Hurst.’

‘That remains to be seen,’ said the General coldly.

It was not until nearly a week later that the General was permitted to visit his nephew. Not that Ernest was seriously ill, but that, the excitement of the first moments past, the officers connected with the duel began to remember the perils of their positions. It was well known to them that they had broken a law, of late years a stringent one, which forbade duelling in the army under severe penalties, or even under pain of death. A case had occurred, not more than three years before, in which one of the combatants was killed. His opponent, being tried by court-martial, was pardoned on account of his services to the King ; but the memory of the trial was still fresh, and the penalty he had incurred, if not suffered, had by no means been forgotten. Colonel Hamilton had therefore thrown a veil over the offence by creating in the General a certain sympathy for the offender, in which he was ably assisted by his friends and Major Hurst. When Middleton was permitted to visit his nephew, both Hertford and Hamilton accompanied him. Colonel Seymour had also much wished to be present ; but

his society was declined, as the two officers justly feared that the General, having partially recovered from his alarm, might be roused to assert his opinion of the delinquency in which he and others had held so considerable a part. Their advice was accepted, and all the more willingly that strong words had fallen from the General, in which his conduct was unsparingly blamed.

Ernest received them cheerfully. He looked somewhat pale, but his voice was as clear as ever; and a smile gleamed in his eye as he marked the soft step and nervous manner of the General, who, having been lectured and alarmed by Colonel Hamilton as to the danger of manifesting any emotion, or exciting his nephew in his present weak state, was almost afraid of hearing the sound of his voice. His hand, however, as he approached, was taken in no sick man's grasp; and the voice was so reassuring, that Middleton took courage, and said:

'I hope I do not disturb you, my dear boy.'

'Disturb me?' said Ernest, with a look of surprise. 'My dear uncle, I have just been proposing to come and pay my respects to you!'

'My dear Ernest, you surely did not think—'

'I did, indeed, uncle. I wished to be assured of your forgiveness.'

'I had forgotten there was anything to forgive,' replied Middleton mildly.

'Then I breathe freely again,' said Ernest; 'I was afraid you were displeased.'

'I was displeased,' said the General, in a tone of annoyance. Then remembering his caution, 'But you may consider yourself entirely forgiven; only another time—'

'I beg pardon, General; but another time I should consider it only consistent with my honour, as a gentleman and an officer in his Majesty's army, to act precisely in the same way that I have now done.'

'Ernest Heyward, this to me, sir! Never mind; we will say nothing now. I am afraid, gentlemen,' he added, in a whisper, 'he is slightly delirious.'



Hertford turned away. Hamilton answered, with a grave smile :

‘Slightly, one would suppose.’

‘Am *I* the subject of this colloquy?’ asked the Colonel, after a pause.

‘You are, my dear nephew. We are sorry to find you so poorly.’

Hamilton, seeing the young officer’s look of amazement, interrupted :

‘Have you seen Seymour this morning, Colonel Heyward?’ Middleton made a movement.

‘Is it safe to introduce a subject that must necessarily bring with it so many exciting recollections?’

‘Certainly,’ replied Ernest, overhearing. ‘He has been with me two hours this morning. Hamilton,’ he added, after a pause, ‘have you seen Major Houghton since he obliged me with his services? I have not yet thanked him.’

‘I did so in your stead,’ said Lord Hertford, with a look that bespoke anything rather than gratitude.

‘I think,’ said the General nervously, ‘that my nephew seems feverish ; this excitement is not natural.’

‘I hope,’ began Ernest, ‘Colonel Hamilton has transmitted to you Lady Anne’s letter : she further desired me to—’

‘My dear nephew, there is not the least hurry. Pray do not fatigue yourself in trying to remember. I know of old, women’s messages are as long as their tongues, and as difficult to understand. I am sure your aunt would be distressed if you were to tire yourself on her account.’

Ernest looked up in blank amazement.

Colonel Hamilton bent forward.

‘I think, General, you must allow Colonel Heyward his way. It is sometimes better to have one’s talk out.’

‘Well, then, my dear Ernest, say what you want, only don’t fatigue yourself. You’re quite sure you like to talk, Ernest?’

‘My dear uncle, I was never more inclined to talk in my life.’

'Well, then,' said the General, who was dying to listen, 'by all means tell us what you have to say.'

'Only this, my dear uncle: Lady Anne—'

'You are sure this is not fatiguing you?'

'Not at all, thank you. Her ladyship—'

'I can easily wait, you know, if it *does* tire you.'

'It doesn't, I assure you. Her ladyship desired me to inform you—'

'Well, I hope you will not stand on ceremony.'

'My dear Middleton, for goodness' sake allow Colonel Heyward to proceed. This would tire the patience of Job!' exclaimed Hertford.

Middleton's eye flashed, but with a self-control that did him honour, but for which few would have given him credit, subdued his vexation, and answered meekly:

'I beg your pardon, my dear Ernest; I did not know I was annoying you.'

Ernest forthwith related the particulars of the interview, and the parting messages of his aunt, which, though eagerly listened to by the General, would prove as fatiguing to our readers as they were uninteresting to Hertford and Hamilton. Suffice it then to say that, with sundry interruptions, our hero found his way at last to the end of his story, his health nowise suffering from the exertion, and his uncle being perfectly satisfied that his nephew's memory at least had not been injured by his illness.

'And now,' said Hertford, after a pause, 'would it be too much to ask an explanation of the circumstances that have placed you in this unpleasant position? I presume that the challenge was sent by Major Hurst.'

'It was,' replied Ernest.

'And was brought by your second? That was strangely out of rule, but I suppose it was impossible to help it. And pray how did he acquit himself of his *devoir*?'

'Most admirably, and with *gran gusto*,' replied the Colonel.

'That I have no doubt,' cried Hamilton. 'But where, then, was Seymour all this time?'

'He was absent on important business,' replied Ernest, with a sly smile.

Colonel Hamilton looked up, caught Ernest's eye, and burst out laughing. 'Well done, the Colonel.'

'I don't see the point of that sally,' said the General.

Hamilton laughed again.

'May I inquire into the reason of your merriment, Colonel Hamilton?' said the General stiffly.

'Only this, General; I was laughing to think of Major Hurst's discomfiture, had he known that at the same time that substitute bore the challenge to Heyward, his second, on the plea of important business, was letting out the secret, and making merry over it at the mess.'

'You don't mean it!' cried Hertford.

'I do, indeed; I was present at the time. You remember, Lord Hertford, I reported it to you.'

'I did not think he had made it as public as you say.'

'And why did you not come straight to me?' cried the General, roused out of all caution, and in a towering passion.

'You were engaged with his grace, General; and we still hoped that the matter could be privately arranged. Had we arrived on the spot only ten minutes sooner, it might have been so.'

The General shrugged his shoulders, but was silent; and in a few minutes he and Hertford retired; the former with many condolences on the sad state of Ernest's health, the latter hoping that Colonel Heyward would be soon able to resume his military duties.

'Hamilton, what is the meaning of all this?' said Ernest, as the door closed behind the General, and he was once more alone with his friend; and then all was explained.

Hamilton considered it as a jest, that was evident; but Ernest looked somewhat grave. He paused for some moments, as though hesitating to speak, but his brow was so serious that his comrade accosted him:

'What on earth are you thinking of, Heyward?'

'I am thinking of what I have just heard. Claude, I do not half like it.'

'Like what, Heyward? You surely—it was only a jest.'

'It was deception not the less,' replied Ernest gravely, 'and I think it should end.'

'Well, that's gratitude, certainly,' said the young Cavalier.

'I am really obliged to you, Claude, for the very kind thought—but—'

'But you will go and betray us.'

'Not betray you, Claude; but I think my uncle should know the truth. I do not like the idea of shamming illness to get myself out of a scrape.'

'And so, when the storm has well-nigh blown over, you will court it again with a vengeance!'

'Is Hertford aware of the plot?' asked Ernest, after a pause.

'Not exactly, though it was he who, in all sincerity, began it, before the state of your case was made known to him; and we thought it no harm to keep up the delusion. But really, Heyward, it did one good to see the General this morning. He has a thorough warm heart, after all.'

'That is what makes me yet more ashamed to have alarmed him for nothing,' said Ernest decidedly.

'Well, you will not have occasion to feel it in a hurry again,' said Hamilton, for the moment annoyed at the ill success of his scheme. 'Why, man, all the whirlwinds of the Sahara would be nothing to General Middleton's anger, when he finds we have deceived him.'

'And yet, in spite of all this, Claude, he must be told.'

The young Colonel's tones were so firm, so calm, and withal so decided, that Hamilton knew not what to answer; and even as he paused the door opened, and Hertford again entered. An expression of surprise covered his face as he noticed the flushed cheek of Ernest and the perplexed countenance of his companion.

'Why, what has happened?' he said hastily; for that something *had* happened he felt certain.

'Colonel Heyward has a question of honour,' said Hamilton,

'which he would be grateful to your lordship to decide for him.'

'Nay,' replied the Marquis; 'and what may it be, then, that cannot be answered either by himself or by Colonel Hamilton?'

'I believe,' said Claude frankly, 'that my conscience is not so delicate as is the Colonel's. Indeed, I plead guilty to being myself the cause of his perplexity.'

'How so?'

'Colonel Heyward,' said Hamilton, 'having found out that General Middleton's clemency results less from approval of his conduct than from an exaggerated idea of his danger, is resolving in his mind whether it is consistent with his honour to permit him to remain under that delusion.'

'Why,' replied Hertford, 'seeing that he is in no manner answerable for his uncle's anxiety, and that the General is as well, if not better, informed of the case than the rest of us, I do not see why he may not be left to his own opinion.'

'Unfortunately,' replied Ernest, 'that is the very thing. We have reason to know that the danger was exaggerated for the very purpose of getting me out of the scrape.'

'That alters the case,' said the Marquis gravely.

'Then you think Colonel Heyward should not take advantage of the mistake to which he was in no degree privy?'

'I should leave that to Colonel Heyward's own feelings,' said Hertford.

'Which lead me to go at once to the General and explain.'

Hertford held out his hand:

'Allow me to congratulate you on your courageous decision; it is the best and most honourable. The truth before all; and I know,' he added, smiling, 'that more courage is sometimes required to confess to a fault than to fight a duel. What do you say, Colonel Hamilton?'

'I think,' replied Ernest, 'that the Colonel is too anxious for the reception I may meet with to enter fully into your feelings. My resolution, however, is taken.'

'The General is apt to be hasty,' began Hamilton, after a pause.

'He can appreciate sincerity,' said Hertford. 'I will come with you.'

'And I also,' said Claude, 'being the principal promoter of the deception. But there is no need of you, Ernest, who know nothing of the matter, and were only the unconscious object of our solicitude; you most certainly did not assist us with your endeavours to appear the same as usual, so why need you go?'

'Because I have reason to believe that this has been the occasion of procuring me pardon on false terms,' said the Colonel — 'a pardon that neither my honour nor my pride will allow me to accept. I wondered at the time why the General was so kind.'

'You are right,' replied Hertford. 'Had you been less seriously wounded, your position might have been worse than it is. It was the General's intention to have arrested you both. The Duke would have been told, a court-martial would have followed, and the result might have been worse than you supposed. As it was, I represented your illness as some slight claim to lenity; but had you died of your wound, Major Hurst would have been tried for his life; and I am not sure,' he added, in an undertone, 'that his services have been sufficient to have procured him a pardon. So you see, young men, some of the dangers of duelling, besides the sin and the folly. At present Colonel Heyward may follow his own wishes, and come with me to the General. As for you, Colonel Hamilton, you are not under Middleton's orders, and your "jest" has not done any harm. It is therefore not necessary to proceed any further.'

Colonel Hamilton looked irresolute; and Hertford, turning to Ernest, resumed:

'Then I am to understand, Colonel Heyward, that you are sufficiently well to accompany me to General Middleton's quarters; or is it your wish to receive him here?'

'I am quite able to come with you, my lord,' said Ernest; 'and, indeed,' as they passed out of the tent together, 'were it not for a certain stiffness in my shoulder, and the inconvenience of wearing a sling, I should be almost myself again. You are astonished, my lord, and well may you be so. Colonel Hamil-

ton acted only through affection for me ; but it would have been unpardonable in me to have continued the deception.'

They walked on slowly and in silence. The heat of the sun was oppressive, and the glare so intolerable, as it reflected from the white tents and hot sandy heath, that Hertford repented his imprudence in permitting Colonel Heyward to accompany him, especially when he found that his step grew slower, and that he leant more and more on his supporting arm.

'You are still far from well, Ernest,' he said at last.

'Yet I am far from being ill,' replied the Colonel, with a smile—'as ill, at least, as General Middleton believes me.'

'I should have scarcely thought it possible,' said the Marquis gravely. 'Colonel Hamilton is not a lover of practical jokes. But did you know nothing of his intentions ?'

'I did not, indeed,' replied Ernest gravely. 'I began to think I must be worse than I thought, when I saw my poor uncle's anxiety. But here we are,' he added presently, as they reached their destination.

'Then leave all to me,' replied Hertford ; 'I must have my own way, so don't speak till I tell you.'

He knocked and entered.

The General looked up.

'Why, Hertford, what insanity is this ? My dear nephew, how imprudent ! how—foolish !'

'My dear uncle, I come hither to assure you that I am—quite able to resume my duties.'

'Hertford, do you hear this ?'

'I do, General ; and I can understand your astonishment. Allow me, however, to offer you an explanation.'

'An explanation !' cried the General. 'I wish you *would* explain ; it needs it. He tells me he is perfectly well, and all the time looks and is at death's door. How *could* you permit such imprudence, my lord ! Look at him !'

And, indeed, Ernest had seldom looked so delicate. His face, at all times pale, was almost marble-like, contrasted with the bronzed features and sunburnt colour of the Marquis ; his

step was slower too ; his strength, whatever his high might lead him to believe, had not returned ; and the walk through the camp, the heat, and the excitement naturally felt, had combined to upset him. He flushed however, as his uncle finished speaking, and signed the Hertford to proceed.

‘Your nephew,’ said that nobleman, ‘has come here this morning to explain to you a slight mistake. His illness has not been so serious as we have been led to believe ; and, he has never been in any immediate danger.’

‘Then I presume,’ replied Middleton, in a tone of suppressed anger, ‘that he has come here to tell me that I have been a fool of.’

‘Why, no, not exactly,’ returned Hertford ; ‘but you have been a little deceived, as I must confess we all were.’

‘It comes much to the same thing, my Lord Hertford,’ said the General ; ‘but, weak as you may think me, I will know my rights of it. You are both aware of the penalties of desertion in this army,’ he added, looking sternly at his nephew.

‘I think,’ said Lord Hertford, before Ernest could reply, ‘that, though General Middleton is justly angry at the desertion that has been practised upon him, he will scarcely hold Colonel Heyward responsible for it, when he remembers that at least was not only guiltless in the matter, but that, no doubt, he is informed of the true facts of the case, than he comes forward immediately, and at any cost, to undeceive him.’

‘Is this so, Ernest ?’ said Middleton, fixing his eyes first on Hertford and then upon the Colonel.

‘It is, General Middleton,’ said Ernest somewhat pained. ‘I had believed you knew me better than to have fancied myself a sharer in a jest upon yourself.’

‘I thought I knew you better than to have supposed that Middleton. Then, after a pause, he added slowly, ‘Must I have reason to be displeased with you, I can fully appreciate the candour of your present acknowledgment ; and for its sake, with the approbation of Lord Hertford, will allow the matter to end here. But remember, young man, that to take any



life, or risk your own, in a private quarrel, is not a folly only, but a sin. See that you keep the peace for the future.'

Ernest bowed and retired, soon followed by Hertford. In spite, however, of Middleton's silence on the affair, it slowly but surely got wind in the camp. It may be Colonel Seymour was less secret than he should have been; anyhow, it soon reached the Duke, and with another commander the consequences might have been serious. But Hamilton, mild and gentle in his displeasure as he was courtly and affable at all times, judged that, the affair having been passed over by Middleton, it would become him but ill to renew it. He therefore sent for the young men before him, and, reading them a rebuke, made them shake hands and promise to keep the peace, both with each other and on all future occasions. Shortly after this they crossed the Border, and the Engagement was finally begun.

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## CHAPTER XV.

'Whilst I, thy dearest, sat apart,  
And felt thy triumphs were as mine,  
And loved them more that they were thine.'

TENNYSON.

THE few months that had elapsed since her marriage had been long and weary ones to the young bride of Edgeleigh. Her love for her absent husband grew each day deeper and more fervent, and her separation from him, her anxiety for his welfare, were proportionately felt. Neither were her daily avocations much calculated to withdraw her thoughts from this one all-absorbing interest. To assist Ruth in the management of their simple household (of which, however, the latter took the greater share), to while away her time in the intricacies of fancy needlework, or to pay a few visits amongst the neighbouring poor, were all the duties and amusements which her present position afforded her; and, even when her hands were busiest, her thoughts were not always with them, but would

lose themselves in day-dreams and bright visions, of which her husband was invariably the hero. Still, day-dreamer as she was, Alice was steadily improving, and even the first few months of wifehood wrought an important change. Enthusiastic as ever in the Royalist cause, she now looked less scornfully on the equally sincere convictions of her father and sister, and by her increased gentleness and deference in their regard unconsciously softened their prejudices, and drew them also to more kindly feelings. Master Heyward, in particular, shaken by conflicting anxieties, and touched by the filial sympathy and tenderness of her manner towards him, received her each day more entirely as his child. Ruth also, kind as she had always been, seemed to lean still more kindly towards the girl, between whom and herself the ties of sisterhood had been so lately riveted; and when time passed on, and the summer succeeded spring, bringing with it new defeats and disasters to the Royal party—when letters from Ernest became few and hasty and far between, and his post on the King's side seemed fraught with ever-increasing difficulty and danger—the calmness and hopefulness of her warm but unimaginative nature were at once a contrast and a comfort to the the impulsive and impressionable Alice.

One morning, after breakfast, the two sisters were, according to custom, seated together in the parlour. The sun was shining in cheerfully through the open window; the soft summer air, the hum of insects, and the fragrance of flowers stole in likewise. Ruth was busy with her knitting, her eyes wandering from time to time over the pages of a Bible which lay open on her knee. Alice—or Mistress Heyward, as she was now called—was employed in some fancy netting, without, however, at all attempting to emulate the industry of her companion. Her face was a little graver than when we last looked upon it, her smile a little sweeter, a little more womanly in its expression; but her hands wandered but idly among the silken meshes, and her pretty head reclined languidly against the back of an arm-chair, which, stiff, upright, and uncomfortable, had assuredly never been destined for so fair a freight. Presently she spoke:

‘ Well, Ruth ?

'Well, dear Alice?' said her sister, smiling.

'You are so silent this morning that—'

'Pardon me, dearest; I had thought thee sleeping.'

Alice's little foot tapped the ground impatiently at an assumption so injurious to her matronly importance.

'I was *thinking*,' she replied.

'Thinking! And of what? Hast thou aught of news, dear Alice?'

'No,' replied her sister wearily; 'there is naught to hear, at I know of. News travels slowly in these parts, sister mine.' Then, with a pretty assumption of wifely dignity, she added: 'When you are married, Ruth, you will have something think of.'

'O, then Ernest was the theme. Well, no wonder it was bright one. Thy head is more busy than thy hands, dear sister.'

Alice looked at her work, and blushed.

'I was weaving a web of still fairer colours and more lasting tightness than this will be. Gold and silver and purple may be fair to look at; but glory, honour, and the fortunes of a beloved one outshine them all. Don't you think so, Ruth?'

And the little enthusiast threw back her long dark curls, and looked inquiringly into her sister's face.

'Verily, I believe that thou art yet dreaming, sweet sister,' said Ruth gravely; 'for I understand not thy words. Take heed that the web thou hast woven be not a snare and a delusion—a work to fade away like a dream, or like the dew from the grass.'

'My dream, if so you must call it, is too fair for such an ending,' said Alice firmly. 'It is too bright, too dear, too holy to be aught but true. But, Ruth, I had something to ask of you.'

'What is it, sister?'

'It is only of a friend of yours I would inquire.'

'What, Cicely? I knew not that thou hadst seen her.'

'Nor have I; but this same Mistress Cicely hath already, in her short residence among us, created so strong an interest in

the bosom of my good sister that it hath made me curious. I pray you, who is she ?

‘She is the daughter of one Master Templeton, the minister at whose house our pious friend, George Gottenberg, hath been so frequently a guest.’

‘Ah, I begin to understand ; and yet I marvel somewhat. Is she young and pretty, Ruth ?’

‘Tastes differ, dear Alice ; but as for beauty, thou mayst judge by the context : she was three-and-forty last July.’

Alice shrugged her shoulders, and replied half indignantly :

‘And this is the heroine about whom you are all gone wild, and whom you are never tired of visiting. Dear Ruth, how can you find anything to interest you in a plain woman of three-and-forty ?’

‘Youth and beauty are not everything, good sister, neither do they last for ever ; and Cicely hath a true heart and a kind one, and hideth many a virtue under her modest exterior. For the rest, she will be a good wife to Master Gottenberg, and, I doubt not, an agreeable neighbour for ourselves. Here comes my father and—’

‘And with him Cicely,’ said Alice.

‘Nay, he is alone, good daughter,’ said the Puritan, as he advanced into the room. ‘See, here is news for thee !’ He threw some letters on the table as he spoke.

Alice caught them and read them eagerly.

‘So !’ she exclaimed triumphantly. ‘There is news at last. Duke Hamilton has left his quarters, and is moving towards the borders with a gallant and loyal army. Langdale and Lord Musgrave await him in Northumberland, and King Charles’s banner will again be worthily supported. Nay, pardon me, father,’ she added, as she glanced towards him ; ‘I had forgotten in my gladness that you thought not with us.’

‘Poor little Alice !’ said Master Heyward kindly. ‘It were strange didst thou not triumph in thy husband’s cause, even were thy own heart more enlightened ; but, as it is, I fear me thou hast yet more enthusiasm than he has.’

‘No,’ replied Alice, a little sadly, ‘he is far above me even

in his loyalty. I wish I were more worthy of him ;' and she looked up with a tear in her eye, but a bright smile gleaming upon her lips, as though even the thought of his superiority were something to rest upon.

'Thou art a good wife, Alice,' said the Puritan ; ' though I would thy cause were other than it is. What more say those documents ?'

'This one,' said Alice, 'is from Edward. He is again in Essex. They have been defeated, and Colchester is lost ; but in a skirmish, somewhat later, some of Fairfax's officers were taken.'

'And thy husband and his friends,' said Ruth ; 'do they still speak hopefully as they were wont to do, or do their late defeats depress them ?'

'They hope still,' replied Alice gravely ; 'they believe in the righteousness and holiness of their cause, and trust in heaven that it will prosper. I think that God must love a cause that has suffered so much,' she added reverently, and almost as though she spoke to herself rather than to them. 'Ernest speaks of the service that has been rendered by Edward in their riskful communications between our scattered forces, and says that his prudence and courage are beyond all praise. Methinks we have reason to be proud of our kinsmen, dear Ruth. But you are silent.'

'They are in truth brave and valiant,' replied the maiden, 'and I honour and esteem the one as much as I love and admire the other ; and yet, dear Alice, I would that their cause also were one to which I could with a clear conscience lend my sympathy and my prayers.'

Alice sighed.

'O Ruth, Ruth, would that you were with us ! You have a noble heart, did you but listen to its dictates.'

'Nay, but I do listen to it, little sister ; and it bids me distinguish the brave and good, even though they unknowingly stray from the paths of godliness and justice.'

'And thus you can give your love to the Royalist and yet hate his cause ! O sister mine, did you love indeed, not with

a sister's love, but with the love I bear to *him*, you would know no cause, seek no cause on earth, save his.'

'And would you then, dear Alice,' said Ruth, somewhat embarrassed, 'espouse the cause of the godly had Ernest been one of its adherents?'

'No,' she replied fervently; 'for had Ernest been other than he is, my heart would never have accepted him. But you, dear Ruth,' she added, with a smile, 'profess more charity.'

Ruth answered not. Her busy hands and eyes employed themselves yet more zealously on the piece of knitting which they had been before engaged upon; and Alice, after waiting a few moments, in expectation perhaps of further comment, rose from her seat, and, gathering her letters together, left the apartment.

Such scenes as these were of frequent occurrence, and very zealously would the two young sisters support their rival causes; and if, as time went on, the occasional presence of Mistress Cicely brought Ruth a staunch adherent, Alice was on her side admirably upheld by her own burning loyalty, the memory of her husband's enthusiasm, and the present counsel and sympathy of her revered friend, Master Clifford.

The kind old man had looked with peculiar interest on that little orphan member of his flock, whose lot seemed cast so strangely away from the hopes and sympathies of her own party; and she on her side had learnt early to look to him for the fatherly advice and guidance of which she was otherwise deprived. The foresight of her parents had already from the first commended to him the religious instruction both of herself and Ernest; and later, Master Heyward had conscientiously, if reluctantly, adhered to his engagement. But Alice learnt other things also in her frequent visits to the 'agent's' cottage. The memory of her Royalist parents was very dear to one who had known them also in their early youth; and many a time, when their task was early ended, or the servant who came to fetch her was detained beyond her time, the tales of past days fell gladly on the ear of Alice, and scarcely less so on that of her betrothed. Alice scarcely remembered her father. He had

been much from home ; and a faint dream-like memory of a tall handsome man, who had spoken fondly to her, and in whose presence her mother seemed so glad and joyful, was all that remained to her of him. Nevertheless, her cheek would flush and her eyes fill with tears as she heard of his noble life, and how he had suffered and died for the King. Her mother she remembered better; her loss had been the first sorrow of her childhood ; and the complete change of surroundings and associations had served to fix the past still deeper in her heart.

'Master Clifford,' she had once exclaimed, when yet a child she had placed herself on a footstool by his side, 'why did I not stop at Fairleigh when my mother died? It seems so strange to have been sent to uncle Heyward when I had a dear old Catholic brother of my own to cherish me.'

'But, Alice,' he replied half playfully, 'Edward was a soldier, as he is now, and a camp is not a fit place for a little maiden like you.'

'And had I no other relatives? Was I so very desolate, Master Clifford? and were all my friends soldiers and sailors?' And her eyes filled suddenly with tears.

'You had other relatives, my child,' said the priest gravely, 'but they were not of our faith, nor would they have been so liberal to you as your kinsman is at Edgeleigh Manor. Your mother had an only brother, noble and gallant as is Edward now. They were Puritans, Mistress Alice, and the first outbreak of the Civil War saw the son of one of the noblest English houses arrayed in arms against his King. The father fought and fell on the side where we hope his conscience led him. His son succeeded to his name and honours ; and the sister, long since a happy wife and mother, adopted first her husband's cause, and finally his faith.'

'And the brother—what of *him*, my uncle?' said Alice, whose dark eyes had never moved from Master Clifford's face.

'Of him I know but little,' said the old man, after a pause. 'Your mother grieved for him and prayed for him, but his name seldom passed her lips. It was but in a few words of bitter

sorrow, shortly before she died, Alice, that his existence was made known to me.'

'But she loved him?' asked Alice.

'Deeply and truly, but he was proud and firm. A few words and they parted, never again to meet, for the times were troubled. Possibly he has since sought her; possibly he will one day meet her child; and then, Mistress Alice, you will meet with one who bore, after her husband and yourself, the greatest share of your mother's love, and you will love him for her sake.'

But this conversation had happened some years before, and Alice was now no longer the spoilt petted child, but the fair trustful bride of a Royalist soldier. New duties and new affections had arisen in her heart, and she had accepted the relations against whom she had at first rebelled. She was scarcely seventeen; but though her step was the light buoyant one of a heedless and unthinking age, her ideas were almost womanly in their fervour and enthusiasm, at least when the interests of her husband or his cause were concerned. Her education had been conducted on a different plan from that now in vogue; and though far from possessing the serene staidness of Ruth, she was quite as fitted for wifely duties as any young Royalist of her time. Her cousin also was kind and considerate. It was no penance for her to take upon herself the actual head-work of the household, and let Alice dream herself into the idea that she was a useful and important helpmate; and if the mending lay over-long beneath those slender fingers, the words of reproof were few and far between; and Alice watered the flowers and fed the pigeons, congratulating herself on her morning's work being finished; but she herself had not finished it.

Ruth knew that Alice would exert herself when needful, and she cared not to cloud that young brow or fill that pretty head with domestic cares. She knew it must be long before the war was over, before Ernest could carry her away to preside over a distant home, and so Alice did what she liked, and if this at first was but little, her cousin's silent example was not without its effect, and she gradually threw off her childishness and turned her attention to more serious duties.

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Amongst the people whom Alice was at this time in the habit of visiting, was a young peasant woman of about her own age, who, rapidly dying of decline, seemed to ask at her hands even more than her usual kindness and sympathy. Alice gave both readily, and rarely a day passed that her steps did not turn to that lonely cottage, where her presence was so eagerly looked for, and her glistening eyes and gentle words invited the confidence and soothed the sorrows of the sufferer.

The story of Katherine was a sad one, and one that thrilled through the heart of her hearer, the more that their faith and their cause were the same. The wife of a Royalist soldier, an orphan and a stranger, bringing with her to her English home the certain traces of hereditary decline, she had followed her husband from place to place with true wifely devotion, and soothed his last moments as he lay dying upon the battle-field; and now a widow and an orphan, she had returned to her husband's home to die. Sadly the story found its echo in the heart of Alice. In many points it was so similar to her own, and even now Ernest might be wounded, dying, dead perhaps, though she knew it not.

'Alas, Katherine,' she said one day, as the dying girl sank back upon the pillow, after again rehearsing the sad scenes of her short life, 'thine is indeed a trial belonging to these troubled times—one, alas, amongst many—but such as God only can console. And thou hast no friends, no relatives?' she added, in a low voice.

'Alas, no, dear lady,' said Katherine sadly. 'My relatives are perished in the war, or gone as I am going. There is none left now but my father's mother, and she is well-nigh upon a hundred, and no one knows if she yet lives.'

'And what does she do?' said Alice.

'She leads a wandering life,' replied the girl sadly. 'Men say she sees strange sights, and reads a dreary weird, and a true one. She has read mine once, and it has come to pass, though I believed her not when she read it.'

Alice started.

'I believe,' she said, 'that I have seen and spoken to her.'

An eager glance passed over the features of the dying woman, and starting up, she clasped both Alice's hands in her own, and fixing her eyes upon her face as though she would read her very thoughts, exclaimed, with a thrilling earnestness that Alice had never before heard, save from one :

'O lady, what did she tell you of yourself ?'

'She said I should be happy,' said Alice ; and Katherine relaxed her grasp.

'Thank God !' she murmured. 'Yes, lady, you merit happiness for your kindness to me. You are in trouble now with fear for absent ones, and your young brow is often clouded. But be that as it may, it will all come right at last. She said it, and I have never known her to deceive.'

Alice bent over her and kissed her forehead, then slowly rose and left her. Three days later the widowed bride was consoled ; Katherine was at rest.

One day towards the close of the summer, when Alice was returning with Ruth from a visit to Cicely Gottenberg, the extreme beauty of the evening tempted them to prolong their walk, until they stood, for the first time after many years, within the old park at Fairleigh. It was a short two miles from Edgeleigh, but on account of the disturbed state of the neighbourhood, their walks thither had been for some time necessarily interdicted ; and to Alice the place, changed and desolate as it was, brought a rush of emotion in which pain and pleasure seemed to struggle for preponderance. Every nook and corner were, to her at least, full of associations. Here the first violets used to grow, and there the primroses for the picture of our Lady ; there Ernest killed his first deer, and yonder was the stile where she waited for her playfellow ; the margin of the little brook had been the haunt of a favourite water-ousel, the shady chestnuts in the background had been the witness of many a glorious game of romps, in which her young mother had joined scarcely less gaily than herself ; and lastly, on yon broad stone terrace had Ernest whispered his first day-dreams in the ear of his betrothed. Coming back to it now, it seemed strangely altered, the more so as they approached

the house. In the park, indeed, the venerable old chestnuts were still standing ; the ground rose and fell in the same gentle undulations, as if the tread of fierce Roundheads or hot-hearted Royalists had never come near it ; but much of the younger wood had fallen beneath the axe, and the deer that once herded beneath the shady branches, or pursued their innocent gambols to the very steps of the hall-door, had been sold to raise money for the King, or had perished from neglect in the lengthened absence of their master. Round the house, desertion and neglect impressed the spectator at the most hasty glance. The garden was a wreck, the walks scarcely visible for the weeds that grew unchecked upon them ; from the stone vases on the terrace a few straggling wild flowers reared their meagre blossoms, and round the windows of the mansion the rugged and untrained rose-wreaths seemed to add to the very desolation which they affected to veil. Alice's eyes filled with tears as she gazed, for, ruin as it seemed now, it had once been so beautiful. Would it again become so ? Ruth would not enter the house, but promised to wait in the grounds ; and Alice turned her steps to the back door, where an old woman sat spinning in the last rays of the setting sun. She looked up as the girl approached, and with a glad cry came to meet her.

' Mistress Alice, Mistress Alice ! why, it's never yourself come back again ! Eh, this is a joyful day to me ; for sad and sair have been the changes sin ye left us, and it's mony a time I have said to myself I should never see my own dear child again. Come in and rest ye awhile, and let me look at ye. Ay, 'tis the same sweet face, but a world more womanly ; and no wonder, it's a weary bit o' time sin ye were last among us, dearie.'

' It is a long time, indeed,' said Alice, as she threw her arms round her old nurse's neck ; ' but I will be a child with you still. I did not know that you were here, Elspeth,' she added, as they entered the house.

' Yes, I have been here all along, dearie ; keeping things going for the young master, or so he says ; for what wi' rheumatiz and failing eyesight I can do but little. But I wadna like to leave the place, and I get help when needed.'

‘Edward is very lucky to have you, dear nurse ; and I am sure he thinks so. Still, I wish he could be here himself a little oftener.’

‘Ah, so do I, dear. But where have *you* been all this time, Mistress Alice ? I’ve heard little of ye sin they took you away to Edgeleigh ; and often I’ve longed to ask, when there have been none to tell me. Dear, dear, and you’ve married and all !’ as she marked the ring on the little hand she held. ‘I hope, mistress dear, your husband is none o’ them Roundheads ?’

‘No, no,’ said Alice, with a bright smile ; ‘Colonel Heyward is a true man to his King, and the husband that my mother chose for me. But he is far away now, and time and hardships have changed him, and you would not recognise the bright boy my poor mother used to love so well. You remember Ernest, nurse ?’

‘Ay, but indeed I do, Mistress Heyward,’ said the old woman fondly ; ‘and if he is your husband I thank God for it. Ah, ’twas a noble boy ; but you’re well worthy of him, dearie. And she passed her hand tremulously over the long raven tresses, and looked tenderly into her face.

‘Would that I were, nurse !’ said Alice gravely ; then, after a pause, ‘You have heard nothing of Edward lately ?’

‘O no, Mistress Heyward ; he used to come sometimes afore he was ordered North. I have heard naught since then. Has Mistress Alice heard aught of ill ?’ she questioned anxiously.

‘No,’ she replied ; ‘but I pine for both my husband and my brother, and their absence seems long to me. Elspeth, I want to look round the house a bit.’

‘Ay, do, mistress dear ; but it is not over-tidy,’ and she bustled into the next room, and soon returned with a light and a bunch of keys, which she gave to Alice.

‘Thank you, that will do,’ said our heroine gently, ‘I can manage nicely by myself,’ and she turned away and slowly ascended the stairs that led to her mother’s apartment. Her hand trembled as she turned the lock, but it was only for a moment ; *the next she stood within the chamber, and drawing back the*

moth-eaten curtains from the nearest window, admitted the fading light into a very territory of dust and desolation. The tapestry, that had once adorned the walls, had long been pulled down, and stowed away for greater security; and the furniture, heaped together in the centre of the floor, had been roughly protected by an old tarpaulin that had been hastily thrown over it. The only objects of interest to Alice were a few pictures that still hung on the walls. The one which first attracted her attention was a portrait, by Vandyke, of an officer in the Cavalier dress. The dark flowing hair, the earnest eyes, the short curl of the lip, and the general expression of his features brought her brother vividly to her remembrance, and she knew that she was standing before the portrait of her father. She stood for some moments before it, gazing earnestly, as though she would compare it with her own, vague, dreamlike remembrance of the original. Then she sought her mother's picture, and found it. With a sudden impulse she turned, after the first gaze, and sought her own image in a broken mirror that stood near her, and almost started as, for the first time, she entirely realised how great was the resemblance. Yes, the fair face, the long dark tresses, the light graceful figure of the hapless Lady Leighton, were each repeated in the daughter, as she stood there, so many years later, in her equally brilliant and impulsive youth. Would her fate be the same? No, if the soothsayers had told her true, her lot was to be a happy one; happy for her and for the loved ones of her heart. 'God grant it!' she said, after a pause. 'These are weary times, and yet my heart despairs not. She spoke of clouds. Where are they? unless it be the parting of Ernest for the war, and that was on me when she spoke.'—Ask not, Alice Heyward; the time will come when thy question will be answered, and the storm will break upon thee.—As Alice turned to leave the room, her attention was suddenly riveted by another and smaller portrait that hung near that of her mother. It represented a youth of eighteen, whose fair aquiline features bore a singular resemblance to those of Lady Leighton, though the expression was totally different. There was a firm unyielding look about the handsome mouth,

but the eyes were grave rather than stern, and the general aspect was prepossessing. Alice had not remembered this picture, but she knew at once for whom it was intended—that unknown uncle of hers, the parting from whom her mother had felt so deeply. Perhaps it was the latter circumstance that now invested the portrait with an interest strange even to herself, and it was with a sigh that she at length turned away from it. ‘I wonder if I shall ever meet him? I think he would be kind to me,’ she said, almost aloud, and then she locked the door behind her, and descended again to the parlour, where Elspeth awaited her. A warm farewell, a promise of a speedy return, and she stepped out on to the terrace. Ruth was not in sight, but the gardens were extensive, and she turned down an avenue in search of her. She was hurrying on rather (for, though the evening was a pleasant one, there was a feeling of utter lonesomeness about the place), when a hand was laid suddenly on her shoulder, and a voice sounded beside her.

‘Whither away, Alice?’

The girl started, and turned suddenly round, a cry of alarm trembling on her lips. It was succeeded by a radiant smile, as her hands were clasped in her brother’s, and his kiss rested on her forehead.

‘My sister, have I frightened you?’

‘O dear, dear Edward, how glad I am to see you!’

‘Where have you been, Alice?’

‘To Fairleigh; to our own dear home. O Edward, I had not been there for years. It seemed so strange, so changed, to me.’

‘It is indeed, Alice; but one day, I hope, it will be as bright as ever.’

‘It will, it will. But, Edward, where is Ernest?’

‘I have not seen him for some weeks. I parted from him on his way to Scotland; but he will soon be here, I fancy, or at least in England. The Duke has crossed the Border, as you know, and I am now about to join him.’

‘Thank Heaven! Then I may once more hope to see him,’ cried Alice. ‘Why are you here, Edward?’

'To collect information regarding the English Royalists, their number, and their willingness to join us.'

'And you have been successful?'

'Alas, no! They are utterly disheartened and dispersed. To-morrow I retrace my steps.'

'To Duke Hamilton, in the North?'

'Exactly.'

'Then you will see Ernest.' She paused. 'You have later news than I have. Is he well?'

'I have heard but little, Alice. He was never strong, and has had much hardship and anxiety to contend with; otherwise there is nothing to distress you.'

Alice sighed, but did not answer. She should see him soon, she thought, and it was impossible to be unhappy with that hope before her.

'I shall pass the night at Fairleigh,' continued Edward; 'but first I will conduct you to the boundary, for it is somewhat late.'

'Yes, it is later than I thought; but I am not alone. See, here is Ruth;' and, having reached the end of the avenue, she stepped forward to meet her.

'Alice darling, how long you have been!'

'I could not find you, Ruth. But see who is with me;' and as she spoke Edward came forward, lifting his hat as he did so.

'Good-morrow, Mistress Ruth.'

A blush rose to her cheek as, with a start of surprise, she extended her hand.

'I am glad to see you, Edward. Where is Ernest?'

'In Scotland. And how is my uncle, fair cousin?' as they walked on together.

'He is well,' she replied. 'How goes the war, and wherefore art thou here, if I may question thee? Surely it is not safe to show thyself,' she said somewhat anxiously.

'There are few who would injure me at Fairleigh,' he replied. 'I shall not venture to Edgeleigh, cousin Ruth.'

'Yet my father would not harm thee,' she said sadly, 'albeit he loveth thee not. Ernest, indeed, he hath forgiven; but he

who beguiled him into the paths of error, he hath yet to forgive.'

'You are severe, fair cousin,' said Edward, a little pained; 'and yet I believe you mean not half you say. You surely could not wish Alice any other than she is,' he added, looking fondly at his sister; 'and poor Ernest could scarcely have chosen a nobler profession.'

'I said not that I condemned him,' said Ruth gravely, after a pause. 'He did as he thought right; but it is a vain cause, and vain is the glory that comes of it.'

'It is a cause for which one would die, notwithstanding,' replied Edward; and then there was another long pause. It was broken by Ruth, as they reached the boundary.

'Here we must part,' she said. 'I thank thee for thy kindness, but we must tarry no longer, or father will deem some evil hath befallen us; and thou too, Edward,' she added kindly, 'thou needest not longer to risk thyself.'

'Here, then, I will leave you,' he answered; 'your way is short and straight, and for mine fear nothing. To the Royalist the night-time is perhaps safer than the day, and my home, if it shield me not from foes, will at least give me shelter from the weather. Methinks I should have styled it a palace during some of my wanderings; but, after all, a soldier reckes little that his couch is the heather and his canopy the sky. Good-night, then, and farewell; and, Alice, pray much for thy husband and thy cause, for I fear me that danger doth menace both.'

He kissed Alice and pressed Ruth's hand in his; then, with a half sigh, watched them depart till the thick foliage concealed them from his sight.

The next morning saw him on his way to Lancashire, where he expected to join the Duke.

In the mean time Alice looked eagerly forward for news from her husband; every step, every sound, seemed to bring him to her mind; and at last, when the hope began to grow fainter, when some weeks had passed, and the country was echoing with the victory of his foes, and her heart was aching with terror and suspense, he came: but how? We must not anticipate.



## CHAPTER XVI.

, there!—a friend, a friend! What seek'st thou here?

JOHANNA BAILLIE.

was the 16th of August 1648. The Royalist army had  
l Preston, and pitched their camp in the neighbourhood  
town. The Duke retired immediately to his tent, where  
l a *levée* and received the advice of the different com-  
s. The Parliamentary army was now so near that a  
seemed inevitable, and the officers traversed the camp,  
lled their troops, and prepared for the events, be what  
ight, of the coming day.

o sun had already sunk behind the horizon when a  
an was observed approaching the camp. On reaching  
posts he communicated with the officer on duty, and,  
his name, proceeded to the General's tent.

was at once admitted.

i your service, Duke Hamilton.'

ajor Leighton, I am charmed to see you. Are you come  
us your assistance to-morrow, in case of a battle?

am, your grace, unless you have other commission where-  
charge me.'

is well,' replied the Duke. 'You have despatches from  
Maurice?'

ave, your grace, as also from some other officers further

o Duke opened the letters now tendered to him, and an  
ion of deep melancholy passed over his features. He did  
never, remark upon them. His tones were somewhat  
when he at length laid them aside, and turned once  
o Major Leighton.

may be,' he said, 'that I shall send you with despatches.  
Maurice seems little able to assist us; but should Fortune  
as to-morrow we may perhaps even be of use to him.'

the Duke's words were more hopeful than was his  
ance, and Edward waited in silence for him to continue.

Presently he did so.

‘Your mission in the South has been a failure,’ he said.

‘In great part, your grace. The Royalists of Kent and of Essex are still loyal and zealous, but they have been mostly dispersed. A victory would, however, encourage them.’

‘And the Welsh troops—Lord Glamorgan?’

‘Is at present inactive. I had an interview with Lord Herbert; but since the fall of Ragland they have not been able to raise much of a force.

‘That is bad, but it is as I expected. We must, then, depend upon our own troops. We have had several new officers and a good many changes, and must hope for the best. I will not detain you; but,’ turning to an officer who had just risen from the table, where he had been busily engaged in writing, ‘first let me present you to General Baillie.’

The two officers bowed, and whilst the Duke turned to his despatches, they drew a little aside and exchanged a few questions relative to the position of the army and general military affairs; after which Major Leighton withdrew, and proceeded to Ernest’s tent.

It was some little distance from the Duke’s, and occupied a gentle elevation overlooking the Ribble. It was a cool pleasant evening, and Edward lingered as he led his tired steed along the smooth green turf, or permitted it to slake its thirst at some tiny streamlet; oftentimes, too, his eye glanced anxiously towards the South, but saw nothing that could indicate the existence of an invading army. But time flew rapidly, and the Royalist soldier had none to squander. The white tents stood forth in the moonlight as he stopped to inquire his way. The one he sought was pointed out to him, and giving his horse to the care of a soldier, he pressed hastily forward, and, finding it open, entered unannounced.

Ernest was busily engaged. The table at which he sat was covered with plans, letters, and papers, whilst his sword lay at his side, as if thrown there in the hurry of business. Ink, pens, and parchment, a few books on military tactics, a map, and a sheet of paper with directions in the Duke’s handwriting,

roved that neither his zeal nor his industry had failed him  
nce his cousin and brother-in-law had last met him. The  
mixture of the tent was scanty, as may be readily conceived in  
the hurry and bustle of perpetual change. There was no light ;  
ut the moon streamed through the opening and lit up the  
surrounding objects with a bright beaming lustre. The young  
olonel was sitting partially turned away from the door, his  
ace half concealed by his unusually luxuriant hair, and his  
en glided rapidly over the paper. He was evidently uncon-  
scious of the presence of his visitor, and as he laid sheet after  
heet of parchment aside, a half sigh escaped him.

‘ Ernest !’

Colonel Heyward started, and raised his head. In another  
stant he was at Edward’s side, and a bright smile lit up his  
features as he clasped Major Leighton’s hand with a heart-  
felt welcome.

‘ My dear Edward, I had not expected this. Do you stay  
with us to-night, or are you still further bound ?’

‘ I stay here to-night ; my further movements depend on  
the Duke. I may be sent to General Middleton. In that case  
I can bear any message to Lord Hertford with which you are  
inclined to intrust me.’

‘ The usual messages of a friend to a friend, Edward ; and  
more, a son to a father, I was about to say ; but one, and one  
only, can hold *that* place with me. Where have you been all  
his time ?’ he added, as he again seated himself and hastily  
brow his papers together.

‘ To Fairleigh, for one place,’ Edward replied, smiling at  
Ernest’s eager questioning glance. ‘ Yes, I have seen Alice, and  
Ruth also,’ he added, in a low half-sad tone which caused his  
brother-in-law to look at him in some surprise.

‘ You have seen Alice ?’ he answered gladly ; ‘ and you have  
message, I doubt not. She is well ? They are *all* well ?’ he  
added, with anxiety.

‘ She is well,’ replied the Major, ‘ though sadly troubled  
about her knight. Poor little Alice, I half promised her a  
ught of you.’

'It is not impossible,' replied Colonel Heyward. 'Now that we are once more in England, that our journey is southward, it may be that we shall meet even sooner than she may fancy. And how is Ruth, Edward?'

'The same as ever,' replied Major Leighton. 'She has truly accepted Alice as her sister, and is the same gentle loving woman as before; only,' he added bitterly, 'colder, and even more averse to the cause in which you and I, Ernest, have vowed to risk our all. You do not know, my brother, the bitterness it is to feel that my victories are mourned and my defeats are triumphed in by her whom I once thought to call my bride.'

'I had not known this,' replied the Colonel gravely, when the first surprise was over. 'Yet fear not, Edward; all may yet come right. Heaven will hear our prayers, and our dear ones will turn to the rightful cause; and then— But it is not for a soldier to indulge such visions,' he added, half to himself, 'when the morrow's sun may shine for us no longer.' Then rousing himself with an effort from his momentary despondency, and assuming a gayer tone, he added, 'Have you seen the Duke and our gallant General Baillie?'

'I have,' replied the Major. 'The latter seems to know his duty, and has but to set us the example. These converts from the Roundhead armies, from the Covenanters, and the Presbyterians seem mostly good and prudent men, if we can but keep the peace between them.'

'Excuse me a moment, Edward,' said Ernest presently; 'I must despatch these letters to his grace.'

He left the tent, and Major Leighton heard him give directions to some one outside, whom he fancied, from the voice, was Hargreaves. In a few moments he returned, and kindling a light, placed it on the table.

'I have still a little business to get through,' he said, as he once more drew his papers towards him. 'I am sorry it is the very night of your arrival, but each moment is of consequence, and his grace has deigned to trust me with commissions usually undertaken by himself or secretary.'

'It is a grave charge,' said Edward slowly, as his eye

wandered idly over the map, tracing his route of the last few days.

'It is an arduous one,' replied Ernest; 'but we must be equally ready to serve our country with sword and pen. General Baillie counsels promptitude and decision, where Middleton would be cautious and prudent.'

Major Leighton did not reply. He was still dreaming over the map. Presently he spoke :

'In the event of a battle to-morrow, do you think that his grace will accept me as a volunteer?'

'Without fail, Edward, I am sure. I will propose it to him myself. You are aware that I am at present on his staff?'

'Indeed I had not heard of it. You have, then, left General Middleton?'

'I have ; or at least his grace was pleased to appoint me to the position I now occupy—I presume through the good-will of Lord Laneric, our kinsman.'

As he finished speaking he rose and turned towards the light. Major Leighton looked up from the map, and for the first time since his entrance the full flowing beams of the lamp fell upon the features of Ernest. He remarked that he was looking ill ; nay, to Edward's anxious gaze, startlingly and strangely so. For what had he done that could so alter him ? Why should he be so pale and thin, so altogether changed ? We must remember that Major Leighton knew nothing of the duel, knew nothing of the last few days' tiring and harassing march.

'You are looking dreadfully ill, Ernest,' he said quickly. Does not General Middleton think so?'

'General Middleton is not here,' said a voice behind them, but Colonel Seymour is at your service.' And as the words were spoken, Seymour and Colonel Hamilton entered the tent together.

Major Leighton warmly accosted the latter. He knew him as a great friend of Ernest, and he knew him also as a man of proven bravery and judgment, of unexceptionable character,

and that his advice and counsel in the absence of Hertford and Middleton were of much service to the young Colonel. Ernest came forward and shook hands with both.

'You have found your way in unannounced, gentlemen,' said the young Colonel, after a pause. 'I presume, then, that Hargreaves had not yet returned?'

'I presume not, most gallant Colonel,' said Seymour; 'and I only marvel that you yourself did not supply his place, as was the case not so long since when Major Leighton was in the South.'

'No,' rejoined Ernest, with a smile at the remembrance. 'I have less time and more business than on the night when we drew upon ourselves the counsels and reproofs of Hertford. You will stay here a while, I trust, as Major Leighton would fain hear the camp news, of which no one can be better informed than Colonel Seymour.'

'You do me honour,' said the Colonel, laughing. 'But if the compliment be not altogether deserved, it is certainly less my fault than my misfortune. However, here goes. I am entirely and devotedly at the service of Major Leighton; and only wait to know the particular day, hour, or moment (I'm sure I can't say more), with the proceedings of which he is desirous of becoming minutely and accurately acquainted.'

'In the first place, then, Colonel, I would know in what order you left Scotland, and where you were joined by Sir Marmaduke Langdale?'

'The first question is one which involves a long answer,' said Seymour complacently. 'We left Scotland a few weeks before we intended, and advanced into England by the western route, at the head, as you know, of a numerous army; entered Lancashire, and proceeded to Preston town, where we are at present. Sir Marmaduke followed us from Northumberland, marching on our left flank at the head of some four thousand English Royalists, and joined us here. Monroe is rapidly approaching us.'

'And are you all encamped here?'

'Not so,' answered Lieutenant-Colonel Hamilton; 'the divi-

sion under Langdale are encamped a few miles off, at Ribbleton Moor.'

'And there they will remain, I suppose,' interrupted Seymour, 'unless Cromwell comes on them unawares, when they will find it less easy than they imagine to repulse him without our assistance.'

'But surely,' interposed Ernest, 'measures have been taken to insure prompt communication?'

'Sir Marmaduke has been appointed to the vanguard, on the condition of keeping the army supplied with guides, pioneers, and certain intelligence as to the movements of the enemy,' said Colonel Hamilton; 'but whether his design be feasible I, for one, am doubtful.'

'But surely,' said Leighton hurriedly, 'this should not be left a matter of doubt?'

'It cannot be otherwise at present,' said Seymour, 'unless the Presbyterians will join our ranks as well as our cause, which is not at present their intention.'

Ernest sighed. 'These differences will be the ruin of our army, I fear,' he said.

'Ay,' said Seymour. 'What with the differences of our men, and the grumbling of our officers, and the alternate weakness and obstinacy of at least one of our commanders—'

'Nay,' replied Claude gravely, almost sadly, 'it is not the Duke but his advisers you should blame.'

'Why, you acknowledge the truth of the portrait yourself, Claude. I never mentioned names.'

'You have done so before,' replied Claude. 'No; his grace is a brave man—a loyal one. Did he judge for himself we should have no need of further counsel.'

'Well,' rejoined Leighton, 'I wish our gallant Duke were free from his advisers, men of no principle, seeking their own interests, and utterly forgetting that of their country and their king. That they should be trusted so fatally! O, for a few more brave and prudent men, such as Middleton, Hertford, Baillie, and one or two others that I could mention, instead of this wretched and mercenary crew! Then indeed we might hope; but *now*—'

'Don't let us despond, Major Leighton,' said Claude, smiling. 'Things may turn out better than we think.'

'And where is General Middleton?' said Leighton. 'He is absent, I hear.'

'Yes, he is away, and so is Lord Hertford,' said Ernest. 'They are both gone to Wigan.'

'That surprises me more than anything you have told me as yet,' said Major Leighton, amazed. 'To send off the only prudent man whose counsel would be of avail to the Duke! And to Wigan above all! The army should have kept close together, not have scattered itself over the country. How is Middleton to assist you at such a distance as that?'

'The Duke has his own advisers,' said Claude bitterly, 'and perchance their foresight has provided against emergencies.'

'And now,' said Major Leighton, fixing his eyes upon Ernest, 'I have another question to ask. Colonel Heyward has been ill. He has been wounded, I suppose. May I ask in what skirmish?'

'In nothing so grand, though perchance as exciting,' said Seymour mischievously. 'A single combat, with seconds and pistols, anent sponsors and swords, as is befitting a modern Cavalier.'

'A duel!' said Leighton, in a tone of amazement. Then more gravely, 'And the Duke?'

'O, it's all right with him. He couldn't spare Colonel Heyward, so was obliged to forgive him. But I am glad you think he looks ill, Leighton, as I've done nothing but tell him so.'

'Well, if he must fight a duel that is the least he can expect,' returned Leighton somewhat gravely. 'Is it long ago, Ernest?'

'A fortnight or so. I am perfectly well again.'

'That's a matter of opinion, and it is certainly not mine,' said Claude quietly. 'Nor is it General Middleton's. He would have him recruit, but our gallant young Colonel prefers fighting to the last.'

'And our gallant Colonel Hamilton would not counsel me differently,' replied Ernest, with a smile. 'If to-morrow be successful, we should both and quite equally lack the courage



to withdraw ; if we are defeated, my honour as well as my duty will retain me by the Duke's side. *Au revoir* to you, gentlemen.'

'Why, where are you going?'

'With these letters to the Duke. Claude, will you come with me? May I avail myself of your horse, Seymour? it will save time.'

'I shall be most honoured, Colonel. It is skittish, to be sure, but you could manage a Bucephalus. Now, Major Leighton, shall you or I play the host in our young Colonel's absence?'

'Neither, thank you, just at present,' replied the Major. 'I am anxious to know what was the end of the duel. I had fancied the regulations somewhat severe on the point.'

'I should think so,' replied Seymour, without the slightest concern. 'But then who thinks of regulations in *these* days? Hamilton won over Middleton to be lenient, by picturing Ernest on the point of expiring; and then Ernest brought all his wrath to a crisis by taking pains to convince him that he was the victim of a hoax—not that he actually was, though: the Colonel was far more seriously hurt than he pretended, as you may see from his looks. Finally, the matter reached his grace, who sent for us all, and having read us a lecture, told us to shake hands and be friends for the future. It was an interesting ceremony then, no doubt; but it was a little too evident that, however *de bonne foi* was the Colonel's forgiveness, it was much the reverse with the Major's.'

'Did you say you were present?'

'Yes, both we seconds; Major Houghton for Ernest, and I for a very dear friend;' and he laughed ironically. 'When the principals were finished we advanced and exchanged shakes. I promise you I never gave a heartier in my life, though your brother-in-law's half-reproachful look was not pleasant to my feelings. I had acted for the best, you know, and no one can say that I was not prompt in my assistance. But we are on the best terms together, while Hurst has not exchanged a word since with Houghton.'

'It serves him right,' said Major Leighton; 'and you too,

sir, could, I think, scarcely have complained, if by your best intentions you had lost your friend. Where is Hurst now?

'He is with Middleton at present. He exchanged into his army early in the summer. The Duke at the same time took a fancy to Ernest, and some say, owing to the influence of Colonel Claude Hamilton, offered him a position on his staff. Hertford recommended him to accept it, and Middleton consented. I think it a very good thing for him; but here he comes again,' he added, as Ernest entered, 'tired to death, I should think. What business have you boys to hurry about like this?'

Ernest gave some cheery reply, and then threw himself wearily into a chair.

'That is right,' said Seymour; 'rest now, or you will not be able to mount your horse to-morrow. Good-bye,' he added, as he bent over him, while a softer look stole across his features than was often known to rest there; but he had a good heart, after all. 'Are you coming, Major Leighton?'

'Not yet; I shall stay here a while, and then seek you at your quarters.'

'*Au revoir*, Major Leighton; *au revoir*, Colonel Heyward. I hope there'll be a battle to-morrow, for the camp's very dull, and we want something to do.'

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## CHAPTER XVII.

'And in his face they saw a something new.'

LADY NORTHAMPTON.

THE first gray dawn of the 17th of August saw the Royalist army astir, and its officers crowded around the Duke. Soon tidings came that the forces under Sir Marmaduke Langdale had been attacked, but whether by Colonel Ashton and his three thousand Presbyterians, or by Cromwell's 'forlorn,' was as yet quite uncertain. The General Assembly had taken umbrage at the army having left Scotland without its permission, and Colonel or Major-General Ashton, for he had just been appointed to

that post, had taken upon himself to avenge the insult. Whilst Sir Marmaduke was disputing the position, the Duke, with rash impetuosity, sent away the 'foot,' who, with the exception of two brigades, crossed over the Ribble, and took possession of the rising ground on the southern side, under the command of General Baillie. Middleton had, as we have before stated, proceeded to Wigan the previous night, accompanied by a considerable portion of the cavalry and by the Earl of Callendar—he himself, a convert from the Parliamentary cause, and one of those who had waited upon the King with the propositions of the Assembly. He was then made Sheriff of Stirling by the King, and was serving at present under Hamilton as his lieutenant-general. Hearing of the attack he returned to the Duke, and effecting a retreat across the Ribble, joined General Baillie, and despatched some six hundred musketeers to the defence of Ribble Bridge. Hamilton sent ammunition and men to the aid of Sir Marmaduke, but in vain. Cromwell had already repulsed the English Royalists, who fled with considerable loss; and Langdale, accusing Hamilton of neglect or apathy, and attributing his defeat to the want of prompt succour from the Scots in his rear, declared that with a thousand men he could have defeated Cromwell.

After a fierce fight of about four hours the Royalists were forced to retreat; the Duke, with his staff, Sir Marmaduke Langdale, and Sir James Turner, succeeded in gaining the town, whither they were hotly pursued. Hamilton, perceiving this, turned and charged the assailants, who retired for a while, but soon returned to the charge. A second and a third time they were repulsed. The Duke called on the soldiers to charge once more for King Charles, and succeeded in gaining on his pursuers. Sir Marmaduke and Sir James entreated him to rejoin his army, which he did at last, swimming the river, and after giving great proofs of personal bravery, joined General Baillie.

Ernest Heyward had kept close to the Duke during the battle, and shared with him both the danger and the glory of his successful repulse at the entrance of the town. He followed him across the Ribble, and then returned with the Earl

of Callendar to defend the bridge. He was standing near Lieutenant-Colonel Hamilton when the latter was wounded; and forgetting everything, save that his friend was in danger, threw himself between him and the foe, bravely defending him until his companions came up and removed him to the rear. Claude, being afterwards conveyed to Wigan, fell into Cromwell's hands, at the taking of that town; on which occasion Duke Hamilton addressed a letter to that general, asking 'for civil usage for his wounded kinsman.'

Night was fast closing in upon the rival squadrons when the battle ceased. The two armies retired to rest within musket-shot of each other. The Duke then called his colonels together on horseback, and asked their opinion as to the course he should pursue. There were two alternatives: either to wait there until General Middleton, who had been sent for, should arrive; or to march away as soon as the darkness of the night favoured their flight. For some moments no one spoke, then a general, and somewhat hot, discussion began. The Duke was grave and sad. Ernest, raising his eyes momentarily to his commander, thought that he had seldom seen his calm lofty brow so melancholy as it was then. He seemed literally to despair, and the most gloomy forebodings seemed to succeed each other in his heart; and if they did so, surely they were well borne out by the future. At length the Earl of Callendar spoke decisively, in the name of a large majority of the officers.

'Your grace,' he said, 'it seems to us most prudent that we should retire this evening.'

'What say our other friends?' said the Duke, glancing momentarily round the circle. 'Colonel Stafford, Sir Marmaduke Langdale, Lord Musgrave, what say you?'

'Lord Callendar has expressed our opinion, your grace.'

'And mine, and mine,' said several other officers. 'We are all of us of opinion that we should immediately retire.'

'Colonel Heyward,' said General Baillie, 'has not yet spoken.'

'I am for remaining, General,' said the young Colonel respectfully.

The Duke glanced towards him, partly in surprise, partly it

may be in annoyance, that one so young and apparently inexperienced should yet hold himself aloof from the decision of his superiors. But Turner and Baillie were of the same opinion ; and Hamilton turned once more to the group.

‘And the rest of you, gentlemen ?’ he said.

‘We all agree to retire,’ said one of the officers, after a brief consultation. ‘We believe it to be for the best.’

‘So be it, then,’ said the Duke.

Sir James Turner sprang forward.

‘Surely your grace cannot, will not, countenance a retreat ?’

‘Sir James, you hear the opinion of these gentlemen. The majority have decided upon the measure, and we cannot gainsay them.’

‘But, your grace—’

‘Nay,’ replied the Duke, with a firmness that he did not often show, and which might now proceed less from obstinacy than despair, ‘I have spoken. It must be as I have said.’

‘May it please your grace to consider—’ began Ernest firmly, but with more than ordinary respect, for from his heart he hated the painful position of the Duke, surrounded as he was by false or interested advisers. He noticed the grave, worn, melancholy features, the tone courteous and commanding, but sad and weary ; and he yearned towards him, in spite of his errors and mistakes, which were perchance leading them to ruin.

The Duke looked once more towards him, and his tone was sadder than of wont.

‘Colonel Heyward, your senior officers have already spoken. Young men like yourself can scarcely know the tactics of war, however zealously they may practise them.’ A faint smile accompanied the latter words, and General Baillie signed to Ernest to continue.

‘The state of the roads is unfavourable,’ he said. ‘A successful retreat is now utterly impossible.’

‘That is by no means a certainty,’ said his grace quietly.

‘The immediate neighbourhood of the enemy should at least be considered,’ said Sir James Turner.

‘The more reason for withdrawing our troops.’

'The inevitable loss of our ammunition,' said Ernest.

'That has already been discussed.'

'The soldiers are tired, wet, hungry,' said General Baillie, 'and perfectly incapable of a long night's march.'

But the Duke was silent. Had one of his trusted and valued friends been true to him in that moment, had even his impetuous brother Laneric interfered, that hasty ill-conceived retreat had never perhaps been undertaken. But no one spoke. No one would recall the opinion he had given; no one would listen to the voice of reason; and the Duke hearing it, and listening to it, failed to recognise its truth. It may be that illness, despondency, and jealousy of those around him had crushed his energy and warped his judgment; but we believe that it was more probably that too great diffidence in his own powers of command, and that too great confidence in the friends he had chosen, which had from the first distinguished him. Ernest would fain have said more, but the Duke silenced him by a glance at once stern and sad; and General Baillie, feeling that enough had been said, and that further discussion would be useless, signed to our hero to retire.

Ernest bowed, and moved away in the direction of Claude Hamilton's tent, pausing on his way to speak to such officers as he was personally acquainted with, and who were eager to hear the final decision.

Claude was on his couch when his friend entered. He eagerly greeted him, and inquired the news.

'As bad as could well be,' returned Ernest gravely and sadly, as he grasped his friend's hand, and sat down beside him. 'The bridge is lost, the "horse" taken to flight, Sir Marmaduke totally defeated; and worse than all, his grace is determined to march away in the dark, without even waiting for General Middleton, and leaving most of our ammunition behind us.'

'This is bad indeed, Ernest,' replied Colonel Hamilton 'But Middleton is at Wigan.'

'Not so. He has been sent for, and will, ten to one, miss us on the road.'

'And who advocated the movement? It is absolute madness,' said Claude impatiently.

'Rather say, who did *not*,' returned Ernest. 'Lord Callendar proposed it, and the rest followed suit.'

'Not you, Ernest?'

'As you will readily believe, I did all that I could; but we needed your influence and zeal.'

'Would that I had been there!' cried Claude, raising himself on the couch and looking eagerly at his comrade. 'Though it had cost my life, the sacrifice would have been a light one. Is it too late?'

'It is indeed, I fear,' replied Ernest. 'His grace is quite immovable, and even the persuasions of General Baillie and Sir James failed to influence him. And yet I *cannot* blame him,' he added suddenly, 'he seems so sad and so despondent.'

'Just what a general never should be,' cried Colonel Hamilton. 'O, would that Hertford were with us, with his cool, cautious, but ever wise regulations; or Middleton, with his long experience! Why did they ever leave us?'

'Sir James is of your opinion, Claude; but it is now too late to think of it. They have been recalled, but only, I fear, to mourn over our shattered army. Something wrong is at work amongst us; and Cromwell, cool, energetic, calculating, knows but too well how to profit by our mistakes.'

'You are right, my friend,' rejoined Hamilton; 'something is evidently wrong; but we—'

'Do not know what it is,' said Ernest.

'Yes, we do know,' said the Colonel seriously. 'It is all through these religious discussions between the Scotch Presbyterians and the English Independents. The latter, of course, refuse to take the Covenant, and the former refuse to join on any other conditions; and so we are obliged to remain at a distance from each other, and thus preclude the possibility of any really effectual assistance. It is all very well to cast the blame upon the Duke, but we should rather take it to ourselves.'

A knock at the door interrupted them, and Major Leighton was admitted.

'I came to inquire after Colonel Hamilton,' he said, as he entered. 'How are you?'

'Thank you, as well as can be expected; and proud to owe my life to our gallant young friend here. We were talking over the events of the day.'

'Somewhat exciting conversation for an invalid, methinks, Colonel,' replied Edward. 'I never saw a more shameful movement in my life; and I cannot but congratulate *you*, Ernest, on the firmness with which I hear you opposed it.'

'A firmness which was, however, thrown away,' replied Ernest, with a sigh.

'That was not your fault.'

'I cannot conceive why his grace has consented!' said Claude, after a pause. 'His own good sense, his discernment, must have pleaded against it.'

'The Duke is afraid of the great responsibility,' said Edward. 'His decision proceeds from no want of courage, I am certain. His conduct to-day has been simply magnificent. His repulse of the enemy at Preston was brilliant, and yet he had only his staff and some half-dozen officers in Sir Marmaduke's suite. And now he permits himself to be biased and ruled by men who are more eager for their own petty interests than for the welfare of his Majesty and the kingdom. Well, it's only too evident that the Engagement is a failure.'

'It is very unfortunate,' said Ernest, after waiting a moment for the opinion of Claude, who was, however, too thoroughly exhausted to reply.

'It is a mistake from beginning to end,' said Major Leighton. 'We should never have entered Lancashire at all. I wonder we ever did so. Middleton should never have left us; and, above all, we should have pitched our camp all in one place. Just see how we were: Hamilton at Preston, Middleton at Wigan, Sir Marmaduke straggling on before, Monroe loitering behind, some by the Ribble, some at Walton, nothing decided, nobody ready. Truly I think our fortune should have prospered! Here comes the Duke.'

As Hamilton entered the apartment of his kinsman there



look of deep anxiety, of painful despondency, on his features that would not easily be removed from it ; that might, on the contrary, deepen and darken, until that noble head had bowed itself to the block in the cause that he upheld so faithfully.

His hair seemed threaded with silver, and yet he was but middle-aged. Truly Claude pitied rather than blamed him as he rose eagerly to greet him.

'You are wounded, Claude ; I trust not grievously,' said Claude, as he pressed the fevered hand of his kinsman and

'This is another evil I was not prepared for, even on the most disastrous day. You have heard our resolution to start to-night ? Think you that you can bear the fatigue ?'

'I shall endeavour to do so, your grace.'

'Well, then, we will start this evening, only as far as Wigan, my lord. I shall there provide, so far as possible, for your safety and convenience.'

'I pray you do not think of me, my lord duke,' said the Duke somewhat impatiently ; 'your army, your cause, your country have greater claims upon you.'

'I retire for their sake that I now retire,' replied the Duke ; 'I now yield to the advice of those around me ; that I may leave my hopes, my triumph, my honour, perhaps, behind me ; saving my cause by a hasty and, perhaps, a riskful flight, with the conviction that men hereafter will say that the Duke has fled through fear.'

The bitterness, the sadness of his tone as he said this ! it rang in the heart of Ernest, and Claude grew a shade paler as he answered :

'Nay, nay, your grace, they cannot say so. They have but to judge upon your conduct of to-day, if "fear" should hover on your lips. And yet, I own, I think the move mistaken. Your grace has been advised, yet would you wait for Middleton, his lordship would, I feel, be otherwise.'

'Middleton will join us, I doubt not, on the road. The names of the officers has been given. I have consented to follow by it. 'Tis not so far to Wigan, after all ; but you

scarcely seem fit to travel even for that distance,' he added, looking earnestly at Colonel Hamilton.

'There appears to be no choice, as your grace starts to-night,' said Claude rather sarcastically. Then, meeting the kind but half-reproachful glance of his commander, he added, 'My wound is not serious, I believe, although I fear it will disable me for some time to come. I am ready and willing to accompany you to Wigan, if we cannot all stay here together.'

'Well, then, that is settled,' said the Duke. 'Major Leighton, you will have your troop in readiness, and, Ernest, be prepared to accompany me.'

The two officers bowed; and the Duke, pressing Claude's hand in a kind, anxious, and somewhat nervous manner, left the tent. Edward Leighton looked at Ernest, who sighed and asked if anything more could be done.

'Done!' cried Claude impatiently, as he caught the last word. 'Do your duty, of course!'

'Yes,' replied Ernest, smiling; 'but what is my duty?'

'To obey, certainly. You have already proved your loyalty by the opinions you have advanced. We must now all bend ourselves to the General's decision, and trust to Heaven that it is less fatal than it seems. You must forgive my acting Mentor, Ernest, but my long experience excuses me.'

'You are right, Claude,' replied Ernest warmly. 'A soldier's first duty is obedience. I will go, then, and prepare for this evening's journey.'

He grasped his friend's hand and turned hastily away. Major Leighton accompanied him.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

'Clash'd on their sounding shields the din of war.'

THE remains of the Royalist army reached Wigan in safety, and after considerable difficulty effected a junction with Middleton, who, having missed them on the road, was hotly pursued,

and subjected to almost continual skirmishing in his attempts to join them. The next morning the united force pushed hastily forward, the country people rising everywhere against them and seriously impeding their progress. At Warrington Callendar persuaded the Duke that the forces under General Baillie should be allowed, or rather commanded, to capitulate. They were indeed but ill prepared for service, having but little ammunition remaining; and were besides tired and exhausted after two days' march through violent rain. The Duke was unwilling, but Middleton counselled the move, and after some delay it was executed; the General, with all his men, surrendering themselves prisoners of war. The Royalist army was now considerably reduced. Sometimes winning, but more often losing, continually meeting with new and unexpected obstacles, disunion soon spread among its ranks. Middleton also was shortly lost to them: riding in the rear his horse fell, and he was taken prisoner by the Parliamentary troops. At length they arrived at Uttoxeter, whence, after a brief rest, they resumed their march.

After Uttoxeter fortune seemed to fail them entirely; despair took possession of the bravest. Beset on all sides by the enemy, men and horses weary and exhausted, many of the troops refused to proceed further; and all were in a state bordering upon mutiny. They insisted upon returning at once to Uttoxeter. In vain the Duke and Callendar assured them that it was 'better to capitulate sword in hand in an open field than to be cooped up in a town.' The mutineers declared that it was the Duke's intention to abandon them, and, with the other general officers, 'to seek safety in flight;' and when they halted for the night, placed double and treble sentries round the commander's tent. In the morning Sir James Turner arraigned them from the window, reproaching them with the baseness and ingratitude of their treatment of the Duke, and reproaching them with their want of discipline. For the moment they returned to their duty, but a new dispute shortly rose. Callendar refused his consent to a treaty with the enemy, and bade all follow him who would. The Duke implored him

to remain at least a night longer, and promised that they would then divide the forces, fight, march, or capitulate, as should be decided in a council of war. Callendar refused to listen, and marched away, followed by a considerable number of the troops. These afterwards dispersed, and Callendar escaped to Holland.

Left to himself, the Duke decided reluctantly to surrender; and measures were taken for a treaty in a house near at hand, where Mary Queen of Scots had been once confined. Lambert sent word that Hamilton might treat with him; but in the mean time news was brought that the Lord Grey of Groby was advancing upon them. Hastily rallying around him the few loyal hearts that still espoused his cause, Hamilton bade them once more 'Charge for King Charles!' and flung himself into the thickest of the fray. Without a moment's hesitation his gallant little band obeyed the voice of their leader, and a short but courageous resistance was made. The Duke fought bravely, but overpowered by numbers, was at length forced to surrender. Ernest, who had sprung to his assistance, received a musket-ball in his side, and fell from his horse. A few moments more decided the battle. The Royalists dispersed, and the Roundheads, satisfied with the capture of the Duke, forbore to follow them.

When Ernest next recovered consciousness he found himself lying on some cloaks in a sort of ruined hut, to which, he afterwards learnt, he had been conveyed, with some danger to themselves, by Edward Leighton and Lord Hertford. The latter was now bending over him, with an expression of grave concern; Edward, a little apart, was conversing in low tones with Colonel Seymour.

Ernest's first inquiry was for the Duke, and the answer brought a groan from his lips. He had learnt to love his general much. At the sound of his voice Edward came nearer; but though he took his friend's hand, he did not address him, and his countenance still remained grave and anxious. Presently he drew Hertford aside, and the three consulted together for some minutes in an undertone.

'What is to be done?' was Edward's first question. 'Can we venture to move him?'

'It is his only chance,' said Hertford gravely; 'but how to effect it I know not. His wound appears to me a serious one, and, though we have done what we can, further attention seems absolutely necessary. What is the nearest town or village?'

'Uttoxeter; but to take him there would be to place him in the hands of the enemy,' said Seymour. 'It is a marvel to me how we have escaped them.'

'What has become of Dr. Hurst?' said Edward suddenly. 'He was with us when the Duke was taken.'

'He rode off immediately afterwards,' answered Seymour. 'He considered it his duty to save *his* life at any rate, in order to be able to help others afterwards by his medical skill. Who comes here?' as the sound of horses' hoofs was heard on the road, coming apparently from the direction in which the other Royalists had fled.

Hertford listened a moment.

'Seymour, your sight is the keenest. Are they foes or friends?'

'Friends,' said Seymour joyfully; 'and the surgeon is with them.'

He advanced hastily to meet them.

The party consisted of Dr. Hurst, General Baillie, and a few other officers, who, arriving from an opposite direction, had learnt the defeat of their party, and, meeting some of the fugitives, had come on in search of Hertford and other officers reported missing, though not taken in the fray.

Their satisfaction at the rencontre was warmly expressed; but Hertford, cutting it short, led the surgeon hastily to the side of Ernest, who was now partly supported in the arms of Leighton. When his brief examination was concluded, Hurst returned to the group, who were anxiously awaiting his decision.

'The wound is not mortal,' he said; and though his tone was scarcely reassuring, the words brought a general exclamation of

relief, for the young Colonel was a great favourite. The surgeon continued: 'The greatest care is, however, necessary, as the least neglect would probably be fatal. Where do you propose to take him?'

It was the old undecided question; but Baillie answered it immediately. 'To Stafford. There is no other place.'

'It is a long way,' said the surgeon; 'but I fear we must attempt it; and afterwards—'

'He had better remain there, I suppose. Major Leighton or myself will arrange to stay with him,' said Hertford.

'Then it must be I,' said Edward. 'Your lordship's safety must be first consulted. You will be more sought after than any one.'

'Has he a home?' asked the surgeon, after a pause.

'Yes, near Worcester.'

'Would he be safe there?'

'Certainly; his father is a staunch Puritan. His brother is one of Cromwell's favourite officers.'

'Has he no mother?'

'No, no; but he has a faithful and devoted wife,' said Hertford.

'And a sister, upon whose kindness and prudence we can rely,' said Leighton hastily.

'And his father is on good terms with him?'

'Perfectly so.'

'Then by all means send him home,' cried Seymour, before the surgeon could answer. 'Hurst, Baillie, you think with me, I am sure?'

'I think that, under the circumstances, the extra risk would be more than compensated by the greater care and attention he would be likely to receive there,' said the surgeon. 'But,' turning to Lord Hertford, 'you will be able to decide this point better after your arrival at Stafford.'

'Shall you not go with us, then?'

'I think not. The fact is that my duties lead me naturally to a larger sphere; but I will leave you all necessary directions for the patient's welfare, and will accompany you for at least a

part of the way, or until we fall in with a larger portion of the army.'

'In that case cannot we all proceed together?'

'No; you will do best to go straight on. Our patient could hardly bear the fatigue of a hasty march; and the presence of a wounded man would hamper the progress, and perhaps endanger the safety of the rest. Still, as long as I remain with you, he shall have every care and attention that I can bestow.'

Hertford seemed ill enough satisfied; but Dr. Hurst had intrenched himself behind his notions of duty, and there was no moving him; and they soon reverted to the actual necessity of the moment—the removal of Ernest to Stafford.

A litter was hastily constructed, under the surgeon's directions, and the journey was, by slow degrees, accomplished. The young Colonel was received into the house of some Royalist friends, by whom every care and kindness were lavished on him. Hertford, generously forgetful of his own safety, and despite the renewed remonstrances of Leighton, remained beside him, watching over him with the kindness of a father, and spending with him all the time that was not necessarily engaged in final efforts for his cause; until at the end of several days his patient was adjudged sufficiently improved to be removed to Edgeleigh at his own earnest request, and with the approbation of his friends.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

'She was not changed when sorrow came  
That awed the sternest men;  
It rather seem'd she kept her flame  
To comfort us till then.'

S. R.

SOME weeks had passed away since Ernest's return home, and they had been weeks of sorrow and anxiety. So ill had he been that his fond father and loving wife hoped against hope as they watched beside his couch; but now he was at last better. Comparative peace reigned through the country; the

cause of the King was upheld by Ormond in Ireland; and Ernest resigned himself to wait.

One day he was lying on his couch, and Alice sat beside him busy with her needlework, sometimes bending over her husband, glancing over the many sealed despatches which he had that morning received, speaking to him freely of their contents, and questioning him as to the state of his cause. So intently was she engaged that she perceived not the entrance of her father-in-law until he was close beside her. She started and coloured, for although he had long ceased to reproach Ernest for his adherence to the Royal cause, and had shown none of the intolerance of his own party, losing withal much of the manner of a rigid Puritan in the society of his Royalist children, Alice could never talk quite freely before him on subjects connected with the war. Probably he guessed her thoughts, for he took her hand kindly and said :

‘Thou needest not fear me, daughter. Conscience may indeed lead me otherwise than thee ; but believe ‘me, not for worlds would I betray thy confidence in me, or injure the cause in which thy husband is engaged. And how art *thou*, my poor boy,’ he added half mournfully, as he stepped up to the sofa, and gazed for a while on the delicate features of his son. The thoughtful expression of Ernest’s face gave way to a smile as he took the hand so warmly extended, and drawing his father to a seat beside him, turned over the letter again, and after a pause continued :

‘There is nothing here to conceal from the very staunchest Roundhead, far less from my father. See, this is from Lord Hertford, advising me to remain here for a while under your paternal care, as his Majesty’s affairs are as yet undecided. You will, I fear, tire of my presence,’ he added, with a smile.

‘Alas, my son, would that I could always keep thee near me ! Thou knowest I cannot bear thee from my sight, lest some evil befall thee. And there is no news of the King, Ernest ?

‘No, father; he is as yet at Carisbrook, and will, I fear, remain there long. It is now October, and though the Engagement has wholly failed, I trust that Montrose will make an



effort in the spring. At present he is in Germany, where he has been created Field Marshal by the Emperor, and is levying troops in his service. I cannot but think, however, that he will help England in her need.

'Methought that he was in disgrace with King Charles—that he had to fly Scotland for his life,' said Master Heyward.

'No ; it was the Parliament, not the King, that laid treason to his charge. His Majesty would fain have assisted him, and laid his commands on Duke Hamilton to plead for him, as, being his sworn enemy, his opinion would have more weight. His grace being but then released from Pendennis, where the Marquis's hatred had confined him, and his life having been more than once endangered by the same, he was yet generous enough to plead strenuously in his behalf. So Montrose was permitted to go beyond sea.'

'And now the Duke is a prisoner himself ?'

'Yes ; and I fear me is likely to remain so. Lords Holland and Capel are also in the Tower, the army is dispersed and disbanded, and things look as bad as they can be.' And Ernest sighed heavily,

'Thou art longing to leave us, my son,' replied Master Heyward. 'Thou wilt barter the comforts of home, and the presence of thine own sweet wife, for the hardships and risks of the camp, and for what thou vainly callest glory.'

'Yet not alone for *glory*,' replied Ernest, whilst a flash of enthusiasm passed over his face.

'I know what thou wouldst say, my son. Thou art right to fight according to thy conscience, and I will not strive to turn thee from the path which thou hast chosen. We will not embitter with vain disputes the time thou yet remainest with us. But thou, Alice, how dost thou regard thy husband's impatience ?'

'I honour him for it,' said Alice proudly. 'It is a noble heart that risks it all in his sovereign's cause. They are the words of a brave man that he has spoken, and I for one will not detain him. O no, Ernest,' she fervently exclaimed, as with a sudden impulse she pressed his hand to her lips, 'I will never

strive to win thee from thy cause ; I will *never* bid thee be unfaithful to thy King.'

'Heaven bless thee, mine Alice !' said Ernest fondly, as he drew her closer to him. 'Heaven bless thee, my own sweet wife, my true guiding-star in all that is most leal and noble !'

Master Heyward sighed. 'Alas, Ernest, may thy guiding-star never lead thee to destruction ! Alas, my son, what should I not feel didst thou become a victim to thy loyalty, and fall upon the battle-field or on the scaffold, knowing that mine was the cause, though not mine the heart, that condemned thee !'

'Well, father,' replied Ernest calmly, 'and even if it should be so, that hour will, I trust, find me ready. And know,' added he proudly, 'that though some might call it a disgrace, to me there could be naught more glorious than to die in my Sovereign's cause, even upon the scaffold.'

Master Heyward's exclamation of horror was cut short, for Ernest had marked the deadly paleness of his wife, and continued cheerfully,

'A truce to these gloomy thoughts, my father. See, they have banished the smile from the lips of Ruth, and turned my Elsie's roses into the whitest lilies. And after all, such a fate need not be mine : all are not slain who go forth to fight.'

'Thou art right, my son,' replied Master Heyward. But cheerfulness seemed to have flown the group. For a while no one spoke. Ruth produced her knitting, and was soon lost in the intricacies of her work ; Alice arranged the pillows of her husband's couch ; and Master Heyward, having stirred the fire out, rose, and looked out of the window.

It was in truth a pretty view that spread itself before the house. No grand or sublime-looking mountains, or vast forests, or foaming cataracts, but smooth grassy slopes and rippling brooks, with here and there a cornfield, scattered even now with a few golden sheaves, clusters of rugged elms and trembling aspens, with ever and anon a gnarled oak, alternating with green hedgerows and cottage-gardens. There was nothing *strikingly* beautiful, perhaps ; but it was a bright picture of

English country life, such as Alice Heyward loved to look upon—one of the few fair spots which had yet been spared by the ravages of the contending armies. Alice loved it dearly, for it was Ernest's home, and this lent a brightness to its most ordinary aspect. And Master Heyward loved it also, as well as he loved any of Nature's beauties; and his eye wandered thoughtfully over it, as if it were for the last time that the autumn sun would shine on it for him. He glanced also afar, as if he watched for some one; but not a human being was in sight; and though the blue curling smoke that rose from behind the chestnut-trees bespoke the presence of the neighbouring village of Fairleigh, no sound of mirth or laughter wafted on the air: all was stern and still, as was the Puritan heart that beheld it.

'Charles will be here soon,' said Ruth, glancing towards her brother.

Master Heyward turned towards them.

'Thou wilt be glad to meet thy brother, Ernest?'

'I shall, indeed,' replied his son warmly. 'But that reminds me I have letters to dictate, which would not well bear his presence.'

'Then I will leave thee, my son. Ruth, good daughter, thou art not wanted here. Ernest, thy wife will perchance help thee in thy expressions of loyalty, and my best thanks to Lord Hertford for the advice he gave thee. How wilt thou send the letters, my son; or shall I provide a messenger?'

'I thank you, father. Lord Hertford has appointed one—my uncle's servant—who brought the letters to me this morning.'

Master Heyward and Ruth then left them; and Alice, bringing the requisite materials, sat down beside her husband and wrote at his dictation, supplying from time to time expressions so fervid in their loyalty that Ernest at last laughingly declared that his despatches would take flight on the wings of enthusiasm, and never reach their destination after all.

James Hargreaves was well fitted to his present mission, that of bearing letters and despatches to the scattered Royalists, being tried, loyal, and prudent. He had willingly consented

to bear Hertford's messages to the brave young Cavalier, whose forced withdrawal from the army had been felt with deep regret by all. He could not repress a smile of affection and admiration as he glanced from the young Colonel to his pretty child-wife, and then, drawing nearer, saluted them with a military bow. Ernest spoke to him kindly, and Alice, taking up the despatches, presented them herself to Hargreaves, not, however, without pressing them more than once to her lips.

'They *must* go right now, Alice,' exclaimed Ernest, smiling again at her enthusiasm, 'coming as they do from a hand so far and a heart so loyal. And now, good Hargreaves,' he continued, holding out his hand to the weather-beaten veteran, who was regarding him with a look of respectful and affectionate anxiety, 'have you heard anything of General Middleton?'

'They say, sir, they have taken him to the Tower, wherever that may be; and his grace is at Ashby-de-la-Zouche, in confinement. That is all I have heard, Colonel.'

'And is bad news enough; but it is what I expected. And Lord Hertford?'

'He is anxious and dispirited, and fears much for the King. They say that the Parliament have thrown out hints of a trial.'

'They cannot, they *dare* not!' cried Ernest, much excited. 'They cannot forget that he is their Sovereign.'

'As to that, Colonel, they seem to have forgotten it already, keeping him shut up in Carisbrook. They say that Prince Rupert has a fleet off the coast, but cannot get near enough to communicate with his Majesty.'

'Yes; he has all the powers on sea that were formerly granted him on land, with an unlimited authority on the shores of the three kingdoms. But I fear me all this will avail little, unless his Majesty has other friends nearer his person to depend on. I do long to be under arms again, Hargreaves; it is quite miserable to feel oneself inactive when the King is in danger.'

'You've done your share, Mr. Ernest; if they had all but done as well!' said the veteran proudly. 'But if ever a man

looked unfit for camp hardships, it's you at this moment, sir.' And, in fact, the flush which had overspread Ernest's features at the entrance of Hargreaves had now died away, leaving cheek and brow almost as fair and colourless as his wife's.

'How mortifying at once to my vanity and ambition ! And I have been congratulating myself on my returning good looks.' But seriously, Hargreaves, I must be in action ; and if England is quiet, I will e'en go to Ireland.'

'Yes ; there's stormy work there ; that I doubt not,' said Hargreaves. 'They say that Lord Ormond is as active as ever, and there'll be plenty of service for all. But when you do take up arms, Mr. Ernest, I beseech you be less rash than you have been, for the young mistress's sake.'

'You must not upbraid me with the past, or fear too much for the future,' said the young Colonel earnestly. 'I have ties to bind me to life, and though that life is ever at the service of his Majesty, and ready to be hazarded or laid down for him, I shall not willingly throw it away.'

The reader may perchance wonder that Colonel Heyward should allude so persistently to the possibility of his death in the presence of his beautiful young wife. But he did it advisedly. Ever since that choice of the Cavaliers' cause ; ever since the prophecy that had accompanied and perhaps saddened it, through the long months that had followed, but especially during his late illness—the conviction had forced itself upon his mind that he would die in the flower of his youth, in the morning of his days. He knew not why this fancy pressed upon him, but again and again it passed before him, returning but to vanish, vanishing but to return ; pictured in various colours, altered, distorted, or glorified by time, or circumstance, or place, until at length he grew accustomed to the vision and prepared himself to accept it from the hand of an inscrutable Providence, whether in the height of glory or in the silence of obscurity. It had come to him in the fresh buoyancy of youth, when his heart was free, unclouded ; when his eager mind rose upward on the wings of loyalty and enthusiasm, and his soul was at peace in the consciousness of right ; and it had not drawn him from his

chosen cause, nor altered the character of his noble heart. It had but drawn him nearer to his Sovereign's side, though that post was the most replete with danger. It had but made of him a man before his time. It had given a thoughtful look to his handsome features ; replaced by a noble earnestness all that was boyish in his former fervour ; had banished the waywardness of youth, and given in its stead the manly heart, the unwavering loyalty, the steadfast fulfilment of his duty to his God and to his King. It had not changed his lofty courage, his winning courtesy, his graceful rashness ; but it made of him a man in heart, though a boy in years,—a man to whom death was no unusual thought, and who was thus most fit to meet it. It was because he felt that Fate was leading him, not only to suffering, but to death itself, that those words of grave foreboding were breathed by him to his wife, to prepare her for the blow, poor child, that she might meet it more bravely when it came. Would it do so ? We think it would not ; it seldom does.

Alice's cheek turned pale, indeed, when these words were spoken ; but her fond heart pictured for him a brighter fate.

'Is Major Leighton still with Lord Hertford ?' asked Ernest after a pause.

'He is not, Colonel ; he is in these parts, I think, but will presently cross over to Ireland.'

'All at their post except myself !' said Ernest sadly.

'O no, sir ; not one tenth of them. A great number have returned home, to wait for a more auspicious time.'

'More shame for them !' cried Ernest ; and his eye flashed indignantly.

'Ah, now you look like yourself, Colonel !' said the old soldier admiringly. 'But may be they are not far wrong. The army is dispersed, and they are waiting to see how matters turn, and if Montrose will come back again.'

'Well, I hope they will remember to do their duty, whether Lord Montrose does his or not. I think he will, but there are difficulties in the way. And now, Hargreaves, you must leave me, as I expect my brother ; and it would not be well for you to meet him. Good-bye,' he added, holding out his hand. 'My

respects and duty to Lord Hertford.' My heart is with him in his loyal efforts.'

'For shame, Ernest,' said Alice playfully, as the door closed on Hargreaves. 'Your heart is with your *wife*.'

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## CHAPTER XX.

'He spake of heroes and their deeds.' LONGFELLOW.

It was the afternoon of the same day. Alice was again with her husband, and Master Heyward soon joined them.

His daughter-in-law put her finger to her lips, and he approached softly and stood at his son's side with something between a smile and a sigh. The unusual fatigue of the morning had left its impress upon Ernest's pale cheek, and it was with a pained look that Master Heyward, after looking at him for a few moments in silence, turned to Alice, and said,

'Poor boy, he is asleep at last. How surprised Charles will be to see him!'

'Does he not expect to do so?' she said.

'No; he knows he has been with us, but I did not think when I wrote that he would remain so long.'

'It is no matter,' said Alice, in a tone that yet seemed to belie her words. 'He will be alone, will he not? and, fond of each other as they are, it cannot fail to be a pleasant meeting.'

Her tone was that of one who, by persuading others, would fain persuade herself. She distrusted her brother-in-law's discretion, should they engage in discussion; and would it be possible to prevent them doing so? Would they not rather do their best to convert each other, for very love and devotion? For a very different reason Master Heyward had fain postponed the interview. Perhaps it was the gradual but progressive change that had taken place in his own opinions that made him shrink from the scrutinising gaze of his eldest son. Be that as it may, he answered,

'I daresay thou art right, good daughter. Yet expect not

an unmixed pleasure. How can they, true and zealous in the different spheres, look with indifference on what each will term the errors of the other ?

‘I know, I know,’ said Alice sadly ; for her father’s words had confirmed her doubts. ‘But surely Ernest is too ill — such discussions. Think you Charles will find him altered ?’

‘He could not do otherwise, my child,’ replied Master Heyward mournfully. ‘It will be long before he recovers strength and colour.’

‘Yes, I know, I know,’ said Alice sadly. ‘But even now he is a great deal better—almost his own dear self again.’

‘Affection deceiveth thee, my poor little Alice,’ said Master Heyward kindly. ‘Thou hast seen him so much worse that the least improvement acquires an important place in thine eyes. But thou must reflect, good daughter, that ’tis more than three years now since Charles has seen him ; and even if the chances of fortune and the fate of war had not wrought a change, it would be difficult to recognise the thoughtless boy of eighteen summers, who then for the first time left our roof. Poor boy,’ he murmured to himself, ‘thy mother little knew to what she doomed thee when she led thee to her erring cause.’

‘You must not call it erring, father,’ said Alice gently.

‘And what, then, shall I call it, daughter ? For in sooth, *as yet*, I cannot call it right,’ answered the Puritan ; but the stress upon the words *as yet* was not lost upon Alice. At that instant, however, a horseman rode up to the door, and they heard the well-known voice of Charles Heyward in the hall. Master Heyward went at once to meet him.

‘Alice, go also and welcome him,’ said Ernest, as his wife drew in her chair to his side, like a dove nestling for safety beneath the eagle’s wing.

‘Why, Alice, my beloved, fear not. Is he not thy brother ! Sweet wife, go forth to meet him, I pray thee.’ And she rose, unwillingly to do so.

In the mean time Master Heyward had met and welcomed his son, for some moments everything forgotten, save the pleasure of his return. Then Ruth whispered,



‘Charles, Ernest is with us.’

‘Here!’ cried the Major, in astonishment. ‘How is that?’

‘He is ill, very ill, my son. So ill that once we feared that he would die; but—’

‘But now?’ asked Charles, fixing his eye anxiously on his father’s face. ‘Tell me the truth. Is he better? Can I see him?’

‘He is better, my son, and see him thou mayst; but I pray thee be cautious with him. Discussion may injure, but cannot move him. This house is a house of peace; let it remain so.’

‘Where is he?’

Master Heyward waved his hand in the direction of the door. Charles, waiting to hear no further, passed him, and, entering the parlour, was met first by Alice, who had risen to greet him. He kissed her affectionately; then, before Ernest had time to rise from his couch, knelt beside him, and clasped him in a long fervent embrace. Then he drew back for a moment, and gazed earnestly on his brother’s face. He was, as his father had predicted, shocked and surprised at the alteration he beheld; but to a generous heart this could only increase the tenderness and affection which belonged naturally to such a meeting. It recalled so vividly the fragile childhood of Ernest, and the smile with which he had been greeted was in its purity and brightness so like the one which had beamed upon the features of their dying mother, that Charles, strong man as he was, was almost overcome. It made him disinclined to speak the reproof that had long been preparing, that had in fact been growing and waxing strong within him, since that eventful morning when grief, dismay, and astonishment had alike prevented its expression.

Alice regained her confidence at the sight of that brotherly embrace; and it was a happy party that ranged themselves round Ernest’s couch for the first time since different causes had divided them.

They had each much to tell and much to ask; and Ernest’s stories of risk and peril thrilled to the heart of his wife, who

had never seen so plainly the dangers of his calling. And Charles also had gained renown, and told of it perchance more willingly, most certainly with greater triumph; and Master Heyward listened and approved, yet yearned to Ernest most,—he who had chosen for conscience' sake a cause so risky, so full of peril and uncertainty. There was much also of home news to be detailed to Charles after his long absence; and thus the time passed pleasantly away, till the summons to supper broke up the circle for a while, and brought an interval of rest to the invalid.

Later in the evening the two brothers found themselves for a brief space alone together.

For some moments a dead silence ensued, each was waiting for the other to begin; for the first time in their lives they were not perfectly at ease together. They believed each other in the wrong; neither doubted that he himself was right. They had been true to their principles from their earliest youth, and, whilst deploring the cause that divided them, each cast nothing more than blindness to the charge of his brother. Charles would have felt more at ease could he have condemned his brother; but he could not. He would have liked to blame, to counsel, to reprove; but the perfect purity of Ernest's intentions was known even to him, and he could not say that he erred in pursuing a course that he believed to be a right and holy one. To argue him out of this belief was in his present state impossible; nay, it would be cruel to attempt it. Neither was Charles by nature censorious or unjust. He had never been young himself, so to speak, and had therefore no indulgence for the follies of youth; he had never been ardent or enthusiastic himself, and he could not understand the feeling in another. When Ernest had stood before them first and announced to them his purpose, he had treated the affair as a youthful escapade, and would have condemned it as such, if his father's severity had not induced him to come forward and shield the sensitive nature of Ernest from the storm that broke so suddenly upon it. But even whilst he spoke kindly, he had blamed much. Far was he, then, from guessing the real struggle that was passing in his brother's heart;

the violent conflict between duty and affection, between his loyalty to his father and to his King. Charles had a warm heart also, but a proud and independent one. He knew not the affection, the self-devotion of his brother; he regarded the flashing eye, the voice of deep emotion, as passing accidental shadows over the bright spirit of Ernest, and never dreamt that they held their source in deep and holy feelings that would guide him through life and strengthen him perchance in death. And he was wofully disappointed now; for Ernest, though changed in many things, was yet more devoted to the Royal cause, and yet more steadfast in the path that he had chosen. As Charles saw and felt this, he strove to be moderate and calm in his expressions; but not the less did the whole force of Puritanic zeal surge high within him, ready to overflow and break through the restraint alike of prudence and affection. Whilst he was considering his plans of conduct, and how first to touch upon the delicate ground of controversy, Ernest turned towards him, with a smile of the most provoking nonchalance, saying,

‘Those grave looks portend a lecture. Let us hear it.’

The abruptness of the interruption, the words themselves breaking upon thoughts which, though mistaken, were at least serious, had the effect of almost upsetting the equilibrium of Major Heyward’s temper. It would have been wiser in Ernest to have abstained from the discussion; he should not at least have been the one to open it; nay, his loyalty would not have suffered had he even submitted to the lecture, knowing it, as he did, to be kindly meant and well intentioned. But the spirit of conciliation had never been one of Ernest’s favourite virtues; and his tone of amused interest was blended with an unmistakable intention to stand by his colours to the last. Charles’s mind was, however, too well regulated to betray him at the onset, and though he answered coldly, no other emotion was visible.

‘I fear it is useless talking to thee now, Ernest, as thou art manifestly prepared for contradiction.’

Ernest had marked the struggle, little discernible as it had been to a less eager eye; and he was too fond of his brother to

give occasion to renew it. He therefore answered seriously, 'I am always ready to attend to you, and have not forgotten, Charles, how, when we last parted, yours was the only voice, save little Elsie's, that was raised in my behalf, and yours the only heart that sympathised with mine.'

'True, Ernest,' said Charles; and still his tone was calm, cold even. 'I made allowance *once* for youthful folly; I gave my love to one who had dashed aside each bond of friendship and of sympathy; but now—'

'But now you can do so no longer,' said Ernest sadly, but earnestly. 'And yet why not? Charles, did our parents turn against each other when their loyalty and their feelings were divided by the chance of fortune? Did they not live in peace and love through all the vicissitudes of their life together, and, bringing up their sons to different causes, thinkest thou that they would sever the ties between them? Yet this, you tell me, *you* would do.' And raising himself on his couch, he gazed with affectionate reproach upon his brother.

Charles could not hear the words or meet the glance, and retain his indignation. He answered warmly,

'I say not so, my beloved but unhappy brother. Far be it from me to abandon thee or to reproach thee—I was going to add, that now years have passed over thee, and thou art now no longer a thoughtless and unthinking youth; nay, I see that suffering hath made thee wiser, I trust even better, than thou wert. But whilst I rejoice at this, so also do I grieve, seeing that thou art still unconverted from the paths of error.'

Ernest smiled; but the smile was very sad; and Charles hastily continued,

'Thou hast known trial and sorrow, my brother; and they have not led thee from the path of evil; and, while I grieve to say it, thou art rapt as ever in the snares of the ungodly. But why should I reproach thee? It were useless, worse than useless, to turn thee now against thy cause. Courted, flattered, favoured, honoured—how shall I expect thee to renounce it all, *and take on thee a cause they have taught thee to despise! When thy cause hath struggled to a close, when thy King hath*

ent to our demands, when the voice of flattery hath given place to truth or condemnation, when thy false fickle-hearted friends have turned away from thee, and thou hast learnt the value of thy so-called honour,—then, suffering or unhappy, captive or exile,—then, Ernest, thine eyes may be enlightened, and thou mayst learn the truth, the holiness, and the simplicity of our cause.’

‘No, never,’ replied Ernest calmly, but firmly; ‘that can never happen. Am I not now suffering and misfortunate, grieved for my Sovereign and my friends? Is not my cause sinking, broken, and deserted—my King a prisoner, and his armies shattered? and do I not for that very reason cling more closely to his cause? It is well to talk thus,’ he added, smiling. I would that I could prove to you how firm is my devotion.

I hold King Charles my rightful sovereign, as the man appointed by Heaven to rule these realms; and the more he is unfortunate, the more he is deserted by those who ought to serve him and uphold him, so much the more is it my honour and my duty and my *glory* to support his cause, even though it brought me, as it has brought brave men before me, to seal it with my blood upon the scaffold.’

‘God forbid!’ cried the Puritan, with a momentary start of horror as he heard.

‘Yet such might easily be my fate,’ replied Ernest quietly; ‘and not my fate alone, but my glory. My faith in my cause is firm. My blindness, as you term it, is invincible. Let us not refer to it again. Leave me to my cause in peace, as I honour you for your adherence to your own. But do not believe that I shall waver. I have not only my mind and conscience, but my very heart engaged. When I last saw you I had not known the King. I now know him, and it is my pride to serve him. I had only *heard* how brave men fought for faith and loyalty; I have now *seen* them fight, conquer, suffer; and the pupil of Middleton, Hertford, and Hamilton is yet more steadfast and more loyal than he used to be.’

‘Middleton! Hamilton!’ said Charles gravely. ‘Would you that I should speak to you of them? or, perchance, you

have already heard?' And his eye glanced towards the table, where several despatches still lay.

'I have heard but little of them since their capture,' said Ernest. 'If you have later news I should be glad to hear it.'

'Well, then, in the first place, General Middleton has escaped.' An exclamation of pleasure and surprise fell from the young Cavalier, and he eagerly asked the particulars. Charles was not indisposed to communicate them. Although the General was, in his estimation, not a Royalist only, but a pervert from the cause of the godly, and as such worthy of condemnation, he could not forget that he was his mother's kinsman, and that he had himself served under his banner. He would not, perhaps, have assisted him to escape, but he was glad at heart that he had done so.

'It was by stratagem rather than by chance that it was effected,' he said. 'Being captured at Uttoxeter, he was conveyed, with Sir James Turner, to Hull. Whilst there he learnt the serious illness of the Lady Anne Middleton at Berwick, whither she had proceeded in the hope of sharing his captivity.'

Ernest was unprepared for this. He asked anxiously if his aunt was in health again. Charles, who did not know her, and who had no great affection either for her or her cause, replied coldly that he did not know.

'General Middleton,' he continued, 'was much shocked by the tidings, and, attributing her illness to her anxiety for him, obtained permission to visit her. A few days later we heard that he had escaped to Scotland, where he is now.'

'He was not, then, released on parole?' said Ernest.

Charles shrugged his shoulders.

'Of that I say nothing. Leastways his enemies are furious at his escape. And it will assuredly go hard with him should he be again taken prisoner. He is an old man now, and one would think would have scarce had the energy to attempt such a scheme.'

'He has plenty of spirit,' replied Ernest, with a smile, 'and would, I doubt not, endeavour to renew an attempt which he

has once found so successful.\* But his grace of Hamilton, have you heard news of him?

'I have done more—I have seen him,' replied Charles gravely.

'Seen him!' ejaculated Ernest. 'How, where, and for what reason did you do so?'

'To satisfy my curiosity for one thing,' replied his brother; 'for another, to satisfy the curiosity of General Cromwell. His grace was sent from Uttoxeter to Ashby-de-la-Zouche, passing through Leicester and Derby. I was sent to him at Ashby, with another officer, to present to him the conditions of his release.'

'And these were—'

'Such as no man of honour would accept; but that, Ernest, was no fault of mine. He was in the courtyard when we entered, looking grave, stern, and melancholy, as well he might; for, set aside his present perilous condition, there are not wanting those who lay the blame of his failure to his charge.'

'That, at least, he deserves not,' said Ernest indignantly. 'But it is ever thus: when a man falls into trouble the world deserts and blames him, as it has before lauded and upheld him.'

'Sure enough,' replied Charles, rising and giving place to Alice, who now returned with Master Heyward, and was soon followed by Ruth. As there was nothing confidential in the conversation, it was, after a short pause, resumed, Ernest first acquainting his father of General Middleton's escape. Charles then resumed his speech, almost as if he had never interrupted it.

'Your words are true, Ernest. Such is the friendship and such the gratitude of those who embark in a wrong cause.'

'You know that such was not my meaning,' replied Ernest

\* The conjecture was correct. Middleton, being taken again two or three years later and sent to the Tower, again effected his escape, thus saving, not only his liberty, but his life, which his foes would have made forfeit to his previous delinquency. He was then eighty years old.

quietly. 'I spoke of the world in general—the world of which many followers are to be found even at the side of Cromwell. It is not grave manners and attire that mark the Christian, neither is it richness and gaiety that alone mark the followers of the world. Ambition may lurk beneath the iron skull-cap, and disinterested loyalty beneath the hat and feather; and whilst I term it ingratitude and baseness to throw the blame upon one who has done his best and bravest for us, I call it no less ingratitude in many of your party, who, like Leslie, Monk, and others, have paid back the benefits of the King by raising their hands against him and selling him to his foes. But pardon me, I meant not to recriminate; yet my remarks are not harsher than your own.'

A long silence succeeded to this momentary outbreak, which, bitter and unpalatable, was yet too true to be cavilled at or denied. Master Heyward looked anxiously at his elder son, as though he feared a harsh or angry retort; but Charles felt that to reply was useless. He seemed as if he had not heard the speech.

'The Duke,' he said presently, 'has already learnt the worth of worldly or even royal friendship, to wit, his long captivity in Pendennis; but he has now no governor like his former one to soften by his courtesy and win over by his graciousness. Nay, I do not now speak exultingly,' he added, as he saw the quick flush on his brother's cheek, and rightly guessed its meaning. 'I pity him sincerely; for though I set little store by noble birth or even royalty, still to one who has been used to courts, and looked to wear a crown upon his forehead, it is harder lines than to his poorer brethren to be commanded by a servant.'

'How mean you?' said Master Heyward; Ernest being at once too surprised and horrified to speak.

'I mean simply this: the Duke was walking in the courtyard when I entered. A sergeant perceiving us, and guessing at our errand, or wishing, perhaps, to show us his authority, walked up to his grace and ordered him to his room. He seemed somewhat surprised, but taking the arm of a nobleman who was with him, turned away in the direction of his apart-



ment. We, following, heard his comment, which was spoken mildly: "See, my friend," he said, "this is a notable instance of the vanity of worldly greatness, and the instability of man's condition in life. A few days since I commanded thousands; to-day I am commanded by a private soldier." The insult was, of course, gratuitous, as there were many present, and escape had been impossible. I never saw the Duke before, and I doubt that he is a rank Royalist and Malignant; yet if ever I felt inclined to knock a man down it was certainly at that moment.'

Master Heyward looked rather astonished at this unexpected declaration; Ruth rather frightened; but Ernest and Alice extended their hands simultaneously to Charles, in gratitude for his generous indignation.

'And how seemed his grace when you waited on him? Was he ruffled or disturbed by the insult put upon him?' said Ernest, at last.

'No; he was calm, quiet, and courteous in the extreme. I was struck principally by his exceeding mildness,' said Charles, lingering on the details that seemed so much to interest his mother. 'He caused us to be seated, and hearing my name, asked if I had not a kinsman in his staff, and spoke much in our praise. He then asked our business with him, and listened with gravity and attention. I could not but wish it was rather worthy of his dignity, and had little expectation that he would accept our terms. I was not, however, the spokesman.'

'And you failed in your endeavour, you have already told me,' said Ernest eagerly; for anxious as he was for the liberation of the Duke, he felt sure, by Charles's words and manner, that release on the terms proposed would have been dishonourable.

'We got nothing from him whatever,' replied Major Heyward. 'He bore the ordeal with patience and self-possession. We were charged with positive instructions from Cromwell, and he was told to use both promises and threats. His grace only replied that he *knew nothing* worth their trouble; and if he *did*, *nothing*, *not even torture*, should ever draw it from him.'

'A brave man,' said Ernest warmly.

'Ay, he is brave enough,' replied Charles gloomily; 'but his enemies are strong. We took leave of him, and have not since seen him; but he is surrounded by guards, and scarcely permitted to stir outside his chamber.'

Ernest was silent. He lay quite still, thinking of the brave but ill-fated nobleman who had been but so lately the hope of the Royalist party. A deep sadness settled upon his features, and he sighed more than once; but he did not ask further questions, or sound Charles's opinion on his probable fate. He longed to know, yet scarcely dared to ask, although it must be confessed that he was not entirely hopeless. The axe had not yet been called in to assist the sword of the Parliament. But few, and those of low birth, had fallen victims to their foes, save on the actual battle-field. England had yet to see the awful spectacle of a scaffold crimsoned with a monarch's blood; the regicide that was to stain the land once and for ever as yet undreamt of, unthought of, unknown, save, perchance, to one heart, to one man, whose hand was to perpetrate the crime.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

'When some dear scheme  
Of our life doth seem  
Shiver'd at once, like a broken dream;  
And our hearts do feel  
Like ships that reel,  
A sharp rock grating against the keel.' C. F. L.

CHRISTMAS was come and gone, and cold dreary January had glided almost unperceived into the bosom of her sister month; the yule fire had glowed upon the hearth, and the holly had furnished a rich harvest of crimson berries, and the crisp snow and dazzling frost jewels had called upon each heart to rejoice in the beauty of the season; but the call had not been responded

to. A dull dreary oppressiveness was on the land, a kind of awful portentousness that was felt rather than acknowledged, a heaviness like that which precedes a storm; and every heart and eye throughout the land looked up from its private hopes or sorrows or forebodings, glancing in anger, in fanaticism, in dread, in admiration, to one kingly head, one royal life, one stately palace far in the great surging metropolis. To Charles the First, Puritan and Royalist alike gazed, but their gaze was different. Shortly before Christmas he had been brought to London; since then he had been confined in the Palace of Whitehall; and Cromwell, Vane, and others had been busy with his trial. Never had the character of this hapless monarch been more worthy of his people's love; never had his lofty mind and gentle nature been so replete with dignity; never in his most palmy days had he been so much a King.

It was a sad time for merry England, even had it not been the presage of one sadder yet; for there was not a household in the land but feared or mourned for dear ones taken from them. Edgeleigh Manor was perhaps one of the least sorrowful, for Ernest had recovered health and strength, and the warm heart and fond affection of its Royalist daughter had shed over it a transient glow. Our young Cavalier still awaited with impatience the summons to rejoin his forces. But Montrose was silent. Hamilton had been removed to Windsor, and was still guarded with severity. Lord Hertford had other things to think of than his young friend and comrade; he was striving with heart and soul to save his King, though at the price of wealth and liberty and life; and Ernest, hearing but few and far between reports of the impending crime, was oppressed with a strange and undefinable anxiety. Still day after day passed on, and brought no tidings either of the war in Ireland or of the destiny of his ill-fated Sovereign.

He was standing by the open window, though the shades of evening had gathered in, and the thick veil of darkness was cast upon the surrounding objects; the chill frosty air blew round him, *lifting the rich auburn locks from his brow, and swaying to and fro the pendent branches of the monthly rose*

that, even in that severe season, hung its scanty foliage round the casement. Wind and darkness both passed unheeded; the mind of the Royalist was elsewhere. Visions of the past and future flew vividly and rapidly through his fancy. Deeds of valour and dreams of glory passed alternately before him; and as the shades of twilight deepened around him, as the objects that had in turn arrested his glance passed onward into darkness, the wild visions of his mind assumed a clearer type, and seemed floating before him in the reality of life. Visions of honour and of glory, and victory and triumph, passed first before him, and then his eye beamed brighter, and his smile seemed yet more beautiful. But the scene changed: other forms passed before him—pale shadowy forms with mourning garments, and bearing laurels indeed, but marked with blood-red stains, and spears that changed to axes as he gazed upon them. Suddenly a faint golden light illuminated the darkness, and a face, colourless indeed, but full of melancholy beauty, beamed from its brightness, and cast a glance of kindness on the young Cavalier. One moment and it was gone, but not before it had awakened in the breast of the beholder dark bodings of an awful and unexpected crime. He knew the face too well: it was CHARLES STUART'S.

A crowd of anxious agonising thoughts rushed through his mind, and a slight shudder ran through his frame. Another moment and the vision had faded, and the soft hand of his wife was placed lightly on his arm.

'Ernest!' The soft sweet voice awoke him from his dream, and as she playfully endeavoured to lead him from the window the cloud passed from his brow; and concealing under a light gay tone the anxiety he really felt, he said,

'Well, sweet wife, what wilt thou of me at this unusual hour? I had thought thee elsewhere.'

'Ruth hath left me,' she answered, raising her large searching eyes to his face. 'To-morrow, thou knowest, our pious Master Gottenberg will take for his wife the grave Mistress Cecily, and Ruth has gone to cheer up the bride. It needs it *in her case, I think,*' she added; 'and I did not regret to be alone.'

But the hour was late, the air chilly ; and, Ernest, I liked not the gloom that was stealing over thy brow ; it seemed like a resentment of ill.'

'Thou art superstitious, sweet wife,' said Ernest playfully. 'Thinkest thou that I am a prophet, Alice, or one of those seers of whom my mother used to speak ? In truth, such gifts were better thine than mine. Romance suiteth better court than camp.'

'O no, Ernest,' said Alice, in a half-frightened whisper, 'I could not bear a gift like that. My very hours of gladness would be such no longer, from the dread of what might darken the future.'

'The future is a sealed book, Alice ; let it remain so,' said a voice behind them.

'Dear Ruth,' said Alice, 'I am so glad you are returned. Ernest is busy with the gloomiest of forebodings.'

'Even so did I suppose,' said Ruth gravely, 'hearing the rain words upon his lips. A truce to prophecy, dear brother ; they were not well to persuade Alice of such things. Better rest content with the uncertainty of life before her than let dark foresight cloud her spring-time, and, perchance, dash the cup of happiness from her lips.'

'Thou art right, Ruth,' said Ernest ; and a sigh escaped him as he thought of the sad presentiments of his secret hours. They had hallowed his life, but they would have blighted the happiness of hers. A knock at the door startled them, and as Ernest opened it a letter was put in his hands.

He carried it to the table, and seating himself beside it, prepared to break the seal ; whilst his pretty wife, with an assumption of indifference, sat behind him, apparently engaged in needlework.

A few moments, and a low smothered groan caused her to look up in alarm. Her husband had sunk on his seat, his face pale and rigid with horror, his eyes dilated, his hair tossed wildly from his forehead ; whilst on the ground beneath his feet lay the scattered fragments of the letter. It was but the work of a moment to spring towards him and conjure him to speak to her,

and to tell her the cause of his emotion ; but it was long before her tearful pleadings could be answered, or her soft caresses rouse the Royalist from his grief. To describe the torrent of thoughts that rushed in bewildering, overwhelming floods through the mind of Ernest would be impossible. It was one vast and violent torrent mingled of many waters. Horror, indignation, and devoted love for his ill-fated Sovereign ; anger against those who had condemned him ; and a wild longing to have been with him to the last, to die in his defence or by his side ; to have felt one more glance from his eye ; to have looked once more on his sad beautiful face ; to have heard again the gentle accents of his voice,—all these and many more rushed upon his soul with a mighty indescribable tide of sorrow, sweeping away for a while the present from his heart, mingling the wild visions of the future with the memories of the past, and shaking his slight frame with the very violence of the storm. The sweet voice of Alice fell unheeded on his ear ; his father's accents were unregarded ; he felt not Ruth's hand as it lay within his own ; he felt not the tears of his wife as they fell softly on his brow. Sadly and anxiously they gazed upon him, but he moved not. Sense and feeling seemed to have been paralysed by emotion. His face, half shaded with his hand, was pale as marble. The lips were firmly compressed ; the large dark eyes gazed abstractedly into vacancy. Alice knelt down and gathered up fragments of parchment from the floor, and as she glanced hurriedly over them the truth flashed upon her ; and though her sight gave to her young heart a deeper pang than it had felt before, she wept not, exclaimed not, but with a prayer for guidance approached her husband, and whispered the name, ' Charles Stuart.'

The words, faint as they were, reached that ear on which all other words had fallen unheeded ; and with a sudden start he removed his hand from his face, and turned his saddened countenance upon them. Paler it was, far paler than they had ever before seen it ; but it was for an instant only ; for as his eye caught the parchment in Alice's hand, a crimson flush brightened on his cheek, and starting to his feet he exclaimed,

‘The traitors! They have done that deed which I had thought that none, not even Cromwell’s miscreants, had dared to perpetrate. O Alice! weep, my beloved: they have murdered thy King. The noblest proudest head in Britain has fallen beneath the axe of her children. My Sovereign, would that I had died for thee! that my last action had been in thy defence, my life’s blood shed in defending thee! O that I had been with thee, then this should not have been! Then shouldst thou have lived, though I had perished in thy stead!’

‘And what couldst thou have done to save him, my son?’ replied Master Heyward sadly, as he gazed upon the excited features of the young Cavalier. ‘What couldst *thou* have done for him that has not been already done for him by others, and has yet been vain? Thou mightest, indeed, have perished; thou couldst indeed have given up thy life: but thou couldst not have prevented his fall; thou couldst not have revoked the sentence that condemned him.’

The last words died away almost inaudibly; for, Puritan as he was, Master Heyward shuddered as he thought upon that deed; but low as were his tones, they were heard by Ernest, who again started to his feet.

‘Father,’ he exclaimed passionately, ‘repeat not those fearful words! Recall not a deed that hath lost, not him only, but the whole honour and integrity of this unhappy land; that hath deprived England of her Sovereign, and hath made her children regicides. O, would that I had died for him!’

He stopped, exhausted by his vehemence, and then reseating himself, reclined his head upon his hand in silent sorrow. Alice knelt beside him, whilst his father and Ruth withdrew from the apartment.

For some little time Alice and Ernest remained silent. She feared again to interrupt his grief, and he was too overwhelmed with indignation to allow himself to speak; and so the long, dark, dreary evening passed, a heavy shadow upon the household, deepest on those two loyal hearts who had loved and suffered for their King, yet had not been allowed to save him. Master Heyward was stern and gloomy also. His faith in his cause was

rudely shaken. His whole soul revolted from the crime his party had committed, and long after the household had retired to rest, and even Ernest and Alice had for a while forgotten their grief and horror from very hopelessness and exhaustion, Master Heyward paced solitarily in his chamber, looking into the secrets of his heart, and asking himself if it could indeed be possible that a good tree should bring forth so evil fruit.

But morning dawned. The morning after a great sorrow, a great bereavement, has something very terrible. The mind has then regained its faculties, before benumbed and paralysed. The ghastly reality rises now with a vividness that it had not at first. The consequences of our loss begin to display themselves more clearly. The various actions of the day recall to us, each in its peculiar fashion, all that we would fain forget. We cry out in our agony as some familiar thing breaks upon us, and touches some sensitive and but now awaking chord. Our life seems crushed within us. The cord of our existence has been well-nigh broken in the wrenching away of that chain of hopes and sympathies and affections, which seemed its very wellspring and foundation. But it is not so. The heart must live on, must weave new bonds, must make to itself new ties ; the old duties must be fulfilled, the days and nights come and go as ever. The world will not stop still for us to weep. We must hurry on, busy in its service, though the tears may be streaming from our eyes, and the pleasures of the past have become burdens greater than we can bear. And so it was with Ernest and with Alice. Life called to them to follow in their accustomed path ; to hope for better things, if they would not be the victims of despair.

It was late in the afternoon. Ernest was writing to Lord Hertford, from whom the fatal tidings had been received. He had written many letters, and destroyed them all ; for his heart was too full, and emotion often prevented him from proceeding in his task. As he was thus occupied, noises were heard in the hall, and Edward Leighton entered hurriedly. He was supposed to be in Ireland, and his presence was as unexpected as *it was* certainly welcome. He was looking pale, however, and



wore his arm in a sling ; and Alice's first words of greeting were blended with anxiety.

'It is nothing, absolutely nothing,' he said hurriedly. 'Ernest, have you heard? Nay, I see you have. O Heaven, that such crimes should be!' Then sternly, 'It's enough to make one forswear one's country.'

'Nay, rather does she not need us all the more to free her from the tyrant that she has fashioned to herself?' said Ernest sadly.

'You say well, you say well; and yet it makes me mad to think of it,' said Edward, as he paced the room in violent agitation, the more touching as well as the more terrible in one so usually calm and self-possessed as he was. 'But, Ernest, I came not solely to bring you evil news. I felt, I knew it would be no secret to you. I came, however, to tell you what you did not know; what generous noble Hertford would not and could not tell you.'

'And that is—'

'Only this,' replied Edward gravely, and yet in a tone of deep and powerful emotion, 'that he and the Earls of Lindsay and Southampton, and the young Duke of Richmond, offered their lives in the place of Charles Stuart's, alleging that "since his Majesty was presumed by the law to do no harm himself, and since he did all by them, his ministers, as they had the honour to act under him, so they prayed they might have the happiness to suffer, instead of him, upon the scaffold."'

'But the sacrifice was not accepted?' said Alice hastily; for her husband was too deeply moved to frame the question.

'No, Alice,' answered Edward bitterly. 'They were permitted instead to attend *his* funeral for whom they asked to die.'

A long pause ensued. It was broken by Ernest, his tones tremulous with emotion.

'Thank Heaven,' he said, 'there are still true hearts among us! Edward, no cause *can* perish that is so upheld; no throne *can* fall *that is supported* by such chivalrous devotion. You *have seen Hertford, then?*

'I have not. I have seen those who were well instructed in what passed at court. Prayers and entreaties were not wanting. The Queen and Prince of Wales besieged the rebels with their passionate pleadings ; and all in vain. The best and most unfortunate of monarchs has been *murdered* by his ungrateful people.' And calm self-possessed Edward Leighton dashed a tear from his eyes as he turned hastily away.

'How is it that you are in England, Edward ? We dreamt you far distant,' said Alice, rather perhaps to break the silence than for any other reason. She saw that he had been wounded, and that he could not thus pursue his profession for the time. He turned to her with a smile, a sad one.

'I was wounded, Alice ; and as I could not serve my country in the field, I came here to see if I could serve her otherwise. I wished much to see Hertford. I could not, but I saw Lord Lindsay, and later the Duke of Hamilton. This is some weeks ago. I have been some time in England, though but few hours in these parts.'

'You have seen the Duke of Hamilton ?' said Ernest, surprised.

'I did. Being the bearer of letters from his brother, I was, after no little difficulty, admitted to his presence. He was strictly guarded, and evidently most anxious about the fortunes of his King, from whom he had but lately parted.'

'Then his grace was permitted to wait upon his Majesty ?' said Alice, her tone faltering as she spoke the last words.

'It was in this manner,' replied Edward. 'The King, passing through Windsor on his way to London, his grace prevailed upon his guards to permit an interview. They consented ; and as the King passed, the Duke flung himself at his feet, in violent emotion, exclaiming, "*My dear master !*" It was all he could say. The King embraced him warmly. "*I have been indeed a dear master to you !*" he replied sorrowfully ; and then he was hurried away, while his grace remained sad and despondent, but following the King with his eyes so long as he was in sight. It seems to me that he even then foretold the end.'

‘Is it known what the Duke’s fate will be?’ said Ernest presently. ‘Has he been brought to trial?’

‘He has not; but that matters little now. Justice has forsaken the land, and those who slew the master will care but little to show mercy to the servant. They say the English Parliament has sentenced him to a fine or ransom of 100,000*l*. This can only mean imprisonment for life, as the Duke’s whole estate could not furnish such a sum, on account of all the debts he has contracted in his monarch’s service. Cromwell himself has been frequently to see him, and urged on him the disclosure of his English correspondence, promising life, reward, and secrecy. The Duke rejected all with disdain and horror, and charged me with a letter to Lord Laneric, that I doubt not is to convey warning of the like trial, should he unfortunately fall into their hands.’

‘Poor man!’ said Ernest, ‘who will break to him the awful news—to him doubly so, being kinsman and friend as well as subject?’

‘Doubtless he already knows it. His servant, Mr. Cole, has free access to London, and brings him all the news that he can gather. Leastways ’twill be told him all too soon. But for ourselves, Ernest, what shall be our course of conduct now?’

‘We have another King to fight for,’ said the young Cavalier. ‘Surely though an exile, uncrowned, proscribed, Prince Charles is our lawful monarch, and to him must we pay the debt we owed his father.’

‘Truly we must do so. He is a brave prince, and promises to be an efficient commander. He has done his part to save the King. Only a few hours before the crime was perpetrated letters were received from Prince Charles, saying that he would grant everything that was asked if they would spare his father, and sending them blank parchments, with his seal and signature affixed, that they might fill them as they pleased.’

‘That is well,’ replied Ernest. ‘I trust that, as our King, he will more than redeem all the promise of his youth, and be as good a man and a less ill-fated monarch than was, alas, his

father. But, Edward, what is it *you* propose to do? As yet we have no army, no general, and no resources.'

'What say you to returning with me to Ireland?' said Edward, watching as he spoke the varying countenance of Alice, who sat beside her husband, her heart beating in unison with every word he uttered.

'To Ireland!' A sigh of relief broke from the lips of Ernest, his cheek flushed, his eyes brightened with something of his old enthusiasm. It seemed like new life to the young Cavalier to strike, even in prospect, another blow for the Stuarts. 'To Ireland! Does the war, then, still continue?'

'The King's death will rather strengthen than paralyse the burning ardour of his friends,' said Edward. 'Lord Ormond is a gallant nobleman, and there is room enough beneath his banner. Come, Ernest, let us try our fortunes there, till England wakens from her lethargy. Let us show them that we, at least, can cling to the fortunes of the Stuarts through the darkest clouds of adversity that can overtake us.'

'We will do so,' said Ernest warmly. 'Name but the day, Edward, and you will find me ready. Is there any chance of our Prince being with us?'

'King Charles is at the Hague. Prince Rupert is in France. Doubtless he will join him speedily, and then there is little doubt that an army will be raised, and Montrose be called upon to lead it.'

'And you will be ready—when?'

'In a few days, may be; perchance not quite so soon. My arm is as yet scarce serviceable, but every day will make a difference. At present I remain at Fairleigh; but I will leave it very soon, I promise you.'

'And you will find me ready. Alice dearest, what say you?' As he marked her pale sweet face turned eagerly, earnestly to him.

'I cannot bid you *stay*, Ernest.'

'Mine own sweet wife!' he said tenderly. 'I knew that such must be your words. And yet you weep, Alice! For

even as he spoke the fair head was bent, and he felt her hot tears falling on his hand, which she had pressed lovingly to her lips. It was but for a moment, and the sweet face was raised calm and peaceful to his own.

'I was weak and foolish,' she said gently ; 'but it is over.'

No ; it was not weak, neither was it foolish. It was but that a hope had been blighted, that a day-dream had faded ; for to those hours of sorrow one ray of hope had been given, and that hope had robbed the sorrow of its sting, and bade her even *then* be comforted. She mourned truly and deeply, the more truly and deeply that her loyalty had been ardent and impassioned ; but even whilst life and liberty had seemed naught to her could their sacrifice have restored her Sovereign, she could not, would not, stifle the one faint hope that now indeed Ernest might linger with her. The hope had withered with the first appeal of Edward to her husband. The words that thrilled *his* heart brought a throb of agony to her own ; yet it was but for an instant.

'Then you will join Lord Ormond, mine Ernest ? You will once more engage in the fearful risks of war ?' she said presently ; and she bent her head upon his breast to conceal the paleness that had overspread her features.

'Yes, Alice ; I will indeed join that gallant Earl,' replied Ernest proudly. 'I will give to the newly-crowned King the loyalty that can no longer aid his father. I will devote my life to him, as I dreamed of devoting it to another ; I will follow his fortunes unto death, and do thou, sweet Alice, witness my vow. The glory of our cause shall yet triumph ; the sceptre shall be raised ; the power of the usurper shall be broken ; and the Stuarts shall conquer at last !'

'Amen !' replied Edward. He turned. Ruth was beside him.

She had entered very softly and had heard Ernest's passionate words. They had left her cheek pale with foreboding, but she blushed as her cousin greeted her. Ernest dropped the conversation, and, himself occupied with Alice, left principally to Ruth the *entertainment* of his brother-in-law for the short space that

he could still linger with them. Master Heyward was out, and not yet expected to return ; and it was to this circumstance that they probably owed the prolongation of a visit that only the urgent necessities of his cause could have induced Edward to attempt.

Ernest's eyes wandered often towards him as he talked with Ruth, and he sighed as he looked ; for he guessed Edward's thoughts, and knew that, gentle as she seemed, she would take far longer to convince even than would her father. It had never struck him before how very pretty Ruth really was ; but now as she sat there, her fair hair escaping from the rigid custody of her Puritan cap, her large blue eyes lighting up under the influence of her cousin's conversation, her cheek with just the faint tinge necessary to beauty, he could not help wishing to see her in an attire more suited to her rank and age. Probably Edward wished so too, and felt how hopeless was the thought ; for his tone was very sad as he rose and bade them farewell.

Then he left them, and returned to Fairleigh.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

'And the old love well'd forth in wilder flow.'

In spite of Major Leighton's great desire to rejoin the army in Ireland, it was nearly six weeks before he was able to do so. In the interim another shock had been dealt to the Royalist power by the trial, sentence, and execution of the unfortunate Duke of Hamilton and the Lords Holland and Capel. All these had borne themselves throughout with great firmness and dignity ; but while the two latter had been powerfully supported by numerous and influential friends, Hamilton, with whom we are more nearly concerned, excited on the contrary but little interest. He was a stranger, far from his own country and people ; yet this, instead of exciting pity, deprived him even — that general feeling of compassion with which the English

Parliamentary peers regarded their former friends, comrades, or opponents. He had only his daughter to plead for him, and she did her utmost, urging the Marquis of Argyle, again and again, to interfere in his behalf. Vain hope. The Marquis, selfish or fanatic, turned from one who had been linked with him so often in favour and in disfavour, and who had been his fellow-sufferer in the 'Incident,' and refused to interfere in the quarrel of the two kingdoms, as he was then pleased to term it. The Duke had asked leave to send for his papers, whereon to found his plea; and protested that, as a prince of Scotland, he was not amenable to their laws; and that he had, moreover, acted only under orders, and by the authority vested in him by the King. But these and all other reasons were disavowed by his enemies; and before the time had elapsed when his papers could reach him, he was brought to trial and summarily condemned. A few hours previous to his death, messengers from Cromwell waited upon him again, and promised even then to save his life, and make him a leader amongst them, if he would answer what they asked him; but the Duke remained firm, and rejected their offers, saying that, had he as many lives as there were hairs upon his head, he would lay them all down willingly rather than forfeit his honour and his duty. And so, true, brave, loyal to the last, he laid his head upon the block, the first, as he was the highest in rank, of the three ill-fated noblemen who had so zealously, or at least so fatally, espoused the interests of their King. The princely Hamilton, the noble Capel, and even the weak vacillating Holland had each staked his all in the service of their King, and paid the price with a dignity worthy of their cause, and honourable to themselves.

Meanwhile winter passed away and spring came, bright beautiful spring. Ernest could no longer restrain his impatience to rejoin the army; and now, when we resume the thread of our story, the long-wished-for summons from Edward had arrived, and he was on the point of departure.

Charles, graver than we have yet seen him, his loyalty a little shaken by the late events, was standing on the threshold, *having so far conquered his prejudices as to come to bid his*

brother farewell. Ernest's words had sunk deeply into his heart, and he would not again cloud that bright but sensitive nature with unlooked-for counsel or rebuke. He knew that they would meet again, and as foes ; for he also was ordered to Ireland, of which country Cromwell had been named Governor. He doubted not that there would be great strife and bloodshed, even were Ormond unsupported by the new King, who, as report said, was about to leave the Hague to visit his widowed mother at St. Germain. The thought of the strife that would soon arise between them softened Charles's heart to his brother and his cause.

'And so we must part at last, Ernest,' he said, as the young Cavalier, having bade a loving farewell to his father and sister, turned to him and held out his hand. 'Well, may Heaven bless and protect thee, dear brother ; and may we meet again in peace and security when the war is over !'

'And when will that be, thinkest thou ?' said Master Heyward, as he laid a hand on the shoulder of each. '*Your* young hearts may see it, and I pray Heaven they may do so ; but I am growing old and can scarcely think to live so long.'

'The young often go before the old, father, let alone in times like these ; and you are hale and strong,' said Charles. 'We will therefore hope always, and trust at length to meet again in this dear old home of ours.'

'And if not, in a still better one,' said Ernest, as he clasped his father's hand and raised it to his lips. 'But we will leave our destiny to God, and all will come right at last.'

'Yes ; all will come right,' said Charles solemnly ; then in a lighter tone, 'Here comes Alice, all in tears to witness the departure of her preux Chevalier.'

Ernest stepped hastily forward, and threw his arm round his wife.

'My poor little Alice, you must not weep so ; you must not send me to the wars with a brow so sad and mournful. My wife must remember her courage and her loyalty, and that I must serve. Heaven knoweth it is hard to thee ! But the Stuart calls ; I must obey.'



'I will not deter thee, dear Ernest. Thou knowest how I glory in thy cause. Thy fame shall be my fame ; thy honour shall be my honour. The prayers of thy wife shall be thy safeguard ; the knowledge of thy love shall be her stay. And yet, Ernest, sad thoughts have been with me ; and how can I be glad when thou hast left me ?'

'Sweet Alice, fear not for me,' he whispered, yet more tenderly ; for her words fell on his ear like an echo to the thoughts that preyed upon his mind in remembrance of the old strange prophecy. 'Fear not, but pray always for our Sovereign and our cause ; and for me also, dear Alice, that the prayers of my wife may be, as thou hast said, my shield.'

'And pray thou for me, Ernest,' she replied. 'Not that I fear for thee, O no ! Heaven will protect the brave ; and I see a happy future in store for thee. And yet,' she added, 'sometimes in the night does my courage fail me, and dark clouds seem to shadow over thy future and mine.' And Alice leant her head upon his breast, and burst into tears.

Those quiet months spent with her husband, her tender ministrations through his long wearying illness, and the sorrow that she had been called upon to share with him, had at last changed the child into a woman. Her enthusiasm had but grown greater with her love—that enthusiasm which is so rare in these times, but which raised up so many gallant men and heroic women in the days we now strive to picture. The secret perchance lay in her unselfishness. Deep, pure, intensely true affection, ardent self-sacrificing love, was the very mainspring of her nature. Her eye brightened and her colour rose in his presence ; the sound of his step, the tone of his voice, caused her pulse to throb, her heart to beat ; but not for worlds would she retain him at her side, not by word or look would she bid him stray from the path where glory waited him, or bid him delay an hour, when honour, duty, or religion called him from her. She loved him indeed so deeply, so devotedly, that when he was away the hours passed slowly and drearily upon their course, and the sun seemed to forget to shine, and the seasons passed almost unheeded into each other ; but still, for

his sake, she was silent, and her very silence perchance drew their hearts still closer together.

She had loved him so many years, more than she could remember ; for, far back as she could cast a glance, he had been still beside her. As children they had played together, had bent before the same altar and lisped their prayers together. She had clung to him for protection in her childish terrors, and told him all her joys and sorrows, that he might share in and console them ; and it was from her heart that he had first drawn that deep devotion to the Stuarts that was perchance the tenderest link between them, and yet the only one that severed them.

She had loved him more when she knelt before the altar, in the calm silence of a winter midnight, and had heard him claim her as his bride.

With yet more intense a love she loved him now—a love that had changed her heart and made it like to his—a love that had taught her to know him as herself, to honour him as he deserved—a love that beamed but for him, brightest of all on earth, but which at the same time drew her yet closer to heaven, and sanctified and blessed the bond between them. Perhaps that was the source of her heroism ; that he had taught her to look beyond him, and fix her hopes in a better world, where naught can perish nor can be blighted, but where all is true, all is changeless, and the light whereof casts a halo of chastened brightness on the sorrows and on the joys of this world. No longer vain, no longer heedless, the beauty she had so prized she prized now for him ; the voice, so sweet before, seemed sweetest when she sang the strains he loved ; the enthusiasm of her nature had grown nobler, and he had taught her to direct it right. One only thing was hidden between them—the prophecies of the Scottish seer, the presentiment of sorrow, and the foreshadowing of joy.

Pardon this long digression, gentle reader ; this unveiling of the heart of Alice. A very frail tearful heroine she seemed now, as she leant against her husband and listened to his parting words.

‘Farewell, farewell !’ he said passionately, as he at length

released her from his embrace, and prepared, with an unclouded brow and, it seemed, a lightsome heart, to mount the noble war-horse that pawed the ground before them, impatient of delay. Then suddenly, by some impulse, of which none knew or guessed the cause, he turned again towards his father, and bending the knee before him, once more besought his blessing.

There was something in his manner as he did so that carried them back to the last few months, to the conversations they had had together, and seemed like a presentiment that those days were gone by, perhaps never to return. Master Heyward laid his hand on his son's bowed head, and then raised him from the ground, and clasped him tenderly to his heart.

'May Heaven bless and protect thee, my gallant boy!' he exclaimed fervently. 'And even though on earth we meet no more, thy father's blessing shall follow thee, thy father's prayers will be with thee.'

Charles started in astonishment.

Was this the stern puritanical Master Heyward? and could he send his blessings and his prayers to the followers of an ungodly cause? For a moment his cheek flushed with indignation, and hot angry words rose to his lips; but the gentle tones of Ernest recalled him to his better self, and he refrained.

'Farewell, my father,' Ernest was saying. 'If in aught I have offended thee in my childhood or in my manhood, if in aught I have disobeyed thy mandates, I now pray thee to forgive me. And, father, as when first I left thee, thine anger was the bitterest of my trials, so now, *when this last time I leave thee*, is thy blessing the greatest of my consolations.'

'This last time I leave thee!' Those words, which had escaped almost unconsciously from the lips of the young Cavalier, fell gloomily and prophetically on the group beside him. But he knew it not. They were parting, father and son; they were parting, Royalist and Roundhead; they were parting, the wavering partisan of Cromwell and the young, noble, steadfast adherent of Charles the Second; and they were never to meet again. *The right might triumph over the wrong; the fate of their monarch might be avenged; the power of the usurper*

might pass away ; a Stuart might again sway the sceptre of the land ; the scion of a royal house might resume his power ; kingdoms might prosper or decay ; but the words of Ernest Heyward would be accomplished, and those two hearts would never be joined again on earth. In dreams they might still be together, and in thought their spirits might commune ; but one life was drawing to its close. Which would it be ?

Passionately kissing his father's hand, Ernest turned away. Fero, his noble steed, knew well the hand that grasped its rein and subdued its wonted impatience, as Ernest vaulted into the saddle.

Alice advanced towards him with a few fond parting words ; her soft white hand rested on the black mane of the war-horse, and her eyes were raised to her husband's face. Charles stood on the doorstep, and saw his brother mount his steed ; felt the last pressure of his hand, and marked the bright tearful smile pass over his speaking countenance. A word, and he was gone. They would meet again, but where ? Cast not thy glance to the future, Charles Heyward, lest some dark vision overshadow thee. A cloud gathers in the distance, and the storm is about to break.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

' I hear the drums' tumultuous sound,  
The victors' shout and dying groans resound ;  
The dreadful burst of cannon rends the skies,  
And all the thunders of the battle rise.' ADDISON.

NEARLY a year has passed by since we last parted from Ernest. His campaign in Ireland has added many laurels to those which he had gained before. He had formed other friendships to replace those that he had lost ; but the pleasure of the present did not efface the sad but yet soothing remembrance of the past. Charles the Second had not yet joined them.

At once he watched the course of events, and rejoiced

in or mourned over the varying fortunes of his followers. At St. Germain's, where he was detained (partly by his own inclination and partly by the influence of his mother) in indolence and inaction, he had heard that Cromwell was made Governor of Ireland, and was about to proceed there. The news had disheartened him, and made him yet more unwilling to join his compatriots in a struggle that could not be of advantage either to his fortunes or his fame. Three months later the news of Ormond's defeat had roused him for a moment from his lethargy, and he had declared that he would join him and share in the struggle which was maintained only for his sake. In vain Henrietta and her French kinsman assured him that he would go there only to share in their defeat. 'I will go, then, to die,' he replied; 'for to live elsewhere is disgraceful to me.' But he did not go. His words were brave; his heart was brave also; but a firm will was wanting. He retired, instead, to Jersey, whence he commanded Montrose to raise an army in his name.

This nobleman, having laid down his arms at the command of the late King, had retired two years before to Paris; afterwards to Germany. Whilst levying an army for the Emperor, he received the tidings of Charles's death. He fainted away on hearing it, and for two or three days shut himself up in his room, and denied himself to every one; but his grief was shortly changed to indignation, and he placed himself under the orders of his new Sovereign, praying him to organise a speedy revenge. He soon received directions to raise forces for a campaign, the Commission of Captain-General in Scotland being at the same time conferred upon him. Devoted to his cause, eager for glory and for victory, he was yet further encouraged by a prophecy that foretold that he would alone restore the King to his authority. Gathering recruits in Holland and Germany, with money from the King of Denmark, arms from the Queen of Sweden, and ships from the Prince of Orange, he once more set sail for Scotland, and landed in the Orkneys with five hundred men, with whom he hoped to conquer a powerful and well-supported people. Probably his singular good fortune in former days, the brilliant successes which he had achieved, and his own con-

fidence in his destiny, blinded him to the disparity between his preparations and the gigantic scheme which they were intended to carry into effect.

The inhabitants of Orkney were, however, little fitted for the military profession ; their only hope was in the fortunes of their leader ; the terror of his name could alone make them victorious. A few English nobles and gentlemen had indeed hastened to enrol themselves under the Marquis's banner, but they had brought few adherents with them. Ernest Heyward and several other officers, with a few troops sent by Ormond, left Ireland and joined Montrose in Caithness a few days after his arrival. The young Colonel was as eager, if not as hopeful, as ever ; and his heart beat fast as the first white Royalist tent met his sight, on a fine March evening, amongst the wilds of Caithness. He went at once to the tent of Hertford.

That general was absent when Ernest arrived there, but speedily returned, and, hearing that an officer was awaiting him, hurried to his room. He started on meeting Colonel Heyward, who advanced eagerly to meet him.

'My dear Ernest, I am indeed glad to see you. You must have started at once on receiving my letter.'

'We did, my lord. And now, before proceeding to other subjects, is all going on as it should do ?'

'That is a comprehensive question,' said Lord Hertford, smiling. 'We are all right at present, I believe. Lord Montrose, it is true, is rather fiercely inclined ; but we hope he will unite prudence with courage. 'Tis a hazardous scheme that he has undertaken. Five hundred Germans and eight hundred islanders—the latter, I fear, somewhat undisciplined as yet ; whilst the Southern Royalists do not join in such numbers as we expected. They have suffered too much already for their zeal.'

'His Majesty has not landed, then ?'

'I fancy it is not his intention to do so. The Committee of Estates have been talking of conditions, and sent one of their *number* to him in Jersey. Harsh terms enough, Heaven knows, *for a monarch* to submit to ; but since these reverses in Ireland, *it was not thought well* to reject them. His Majesty has there

fore appointed them to meet him at Breda, where an answer will be given.'

'And in the mean time we are to fight?'

'I suppose so. Lord Montrose is averse to a peace—to such a peace, at least, as we are likely to obtain. Nay, some people say that he has hastened his arrival, for fear lest a treaty should render his services unnecessary.'

'Heaven grant that we may choose rightly, whether for peace or war!' replied Ernest.

'You say well. But now, Ernest, a word with you. Now that we are again together, let us say farewell to knight-errantry. You are no longer a boy, and, to speak truly, you have acquired so grave an expression since I met you, that I hold my caution scarcely necessary.'

Ernest smiled, his own bright smile.

'It is some time since I last saw you,' he said; 'and,' he added sadly, 'events have occurred since then which were well fit to sadden us all.'

'It is so; sad indeed has been the interval, and awful, most awful, the crime that has been perpetrated. But we have still a King to fight and die for; we have still a Stuart to uphold.'

'We have,' replied Ernest; 'and may he speedily regain the throne of his ancestors! I long to see the son of my royal but ill-fated master.'

'Your wish will, I trust, be gratified; but meanwhile I must present you to the Marquis of Montrose, whom you are well-nigh certain to adore; and to others, some of whom are already well-known to you.'

'Is General Middleton with you?'

'He is not at present; but will join us, I doubt not. Colonel Seymour and Major Hurst arrived but yesterday. So you are in good time, Ernest Heyward.'

'And Claude Hamilton, is he here?'

'He is; and will be eager to greet you. Are you inclined to proceed to our generalissimo's tent? I have business there, and he is holding a levée.'

'I shall be delighted to accompany you'

The two officers left the tent and proceeded across the camp. As they walked along, they discussed the last few months. Then Hertford said,

‘Your fair lady is an enthusiast in your cause, Ernest; for I doubt not that those poetical effusions and sentiments were the productions of *her* pen, so different were they in style and in writing from your usual despatches.’

Ernest smiled.

‘Yes!’ he replied, after a pause, ‘my Alice’s words, though from the heart, and sufficiently elegant for so fair a hand, were scarcely appropriate from a soldier to his general.’

‘From a friend to a friend, Ernest!’ said Hertford kindly. ‘And so you resumed the pen yourself. I can assure you,’ he added, ‘that nothing could have been more welcome than those few lines in your own writing. It showed me that you were on the *road* to recovery.’

Ernest laughed. ‘You were kind indeed to excuse such a scrawl,’ he replied warmly. ‘For myself, I was almost ashamed to send it to you.’

‘And wherefore?’ said Hertford. ‘Methinks there is more to be proud of in those brief lines than in half the despatches that are sent to us daily; for they proved that you had not only boasted, but fought and suffered for your King. Here we are, Ernest.’

As he spoke he approached the sentinel, and giving his name and that of his young companion, they were instantly ushered into a spacious tent, fitted up with some attempt at decoration. Flags and pennons covered the walls, and a richly-dressed crowd of Cavaliers were congregated in the centre, while smaller groups were scattered round; but Ernest’s eye, with all the impetuosity of a youthful soldier, singled out at once the Marquis of Montrose, well known to him by description, though they had never yet met.

Standing on a slightly-raised platform, the latter addressed *himself* by turns to the officers who pressed around him, eager to obtain a look or a word from a man whose heroic deeds and martial fame had already raised him to the level of a hero of



romance. Gifted, loyal, and devoted to his cause, with brilliant talents, extraordinary courage, and unequalled ambition, he passed through his short but honoured career, feared by his foes and idolised by his own adherents.

The crowd of noblemen and gentlemen gave way before Hertford, and opened for him a passage to the very foot of the platform. Montrose himself turned eagerly to greet him, for he both honoured and esteemed the man who had served his King so devotedly and with such disinterested service. He glanced also on Ernest, as with a look of interest, half real and half assumed, he said :

‘Good-morrow, Lord Hertford. In what can we serve you this evening? And who is this young officer who comes to offer us his assistance; for I presume that such is his mission?’

‘Colonel Heyward, my lord, late of Duke Hamilton’s staff, and nephew to General Middleton. He is not unknown to most of these officers, nor can his name be, I think, to your lordship.’

‘No, indeed!’ replied Montrose. ‘I have heard it often, and in language that reflects honour upon its owner; the more especially,’ he added, ‘when the latter is so very young a man as Colonel Heyward appears to be. Is it possible that he is the hero of so many feats of arms?’

‘I do not know what you may have heard, my lord,’ replied Hertford; ‘but this I *can* say, that you have not heard too much. It is not every one for whom I would say the same in his presence; and, perchance,’ he added, smiling at the deepening colour in Ernest’s cheek, ‘I have done wrong in saying it in *his*.’

Montrose laughed.

‘Not so. But we will take Colonel Heyward on your recommendation, and hope he will prove himself worthy of his reputation. When the King comes, he will doubtless be delighted to avail himself of the services of one who has fought so bravely for his father. In the mean time, I shall be glad to have him about *me*. But I will not now detain you, young sir. You will *probably* be glad to renew your acquaintance with your brother officers?’

He bowed courteously ; and Colonel Seymour approached with a cordial greeting.

‘I am delighted to see you, Colonel Heyward. It is so long since I have had that pleasure that I have almost forgotten how you should look. You certainly seem more life-like than when we last parted. You have no idea how I have missed you, Ernest ; and now that you are returned, we may hope for a little excitement again. But I must not engross you entirely. Here are other old friends who will be delighted to meet you.’

Stafford, Sydenham, and others now drew near with the warmest of welcomes ; and then Ernest turned to Major Hurst, who just then made his appearance, and extending his hand, said, with a half smile,

‘And you, too, Major Hurst, have come to win laurels under the gallant Montrose.’

‘Colonel Heyward!’ exclaimed the Major, with a start of surprise. ‘I had not heard of your arrival. I had fancied you were engaged in the Irish campaign, whence we have heard much of your gallantry.’

The words and manner were courteous, if not cordial ; and he did not refuse the proffered hand. They would never be friends ; but until further provocation should pass between them, Ernest was too generous, Hurst too politic, to continue a quarrel the price of which had been already paid.

A few minutes afterwards the levée terminated, and Ernest, on leaving the tent, met Major Leighton, who had preceded him to the camp, having been again in England. He welcomed him with the greatest warmth, and eagerly inquired after the inhabitants of Edgeleigh. Ernest satisfied him as to their well-being, dwelling more especially on the increased kindness of his father, and the tolerance with which both he and Ruth seemed now to regard the Royalist cause. Of Charles also he spoke, but in a less hopeful strain. He saw how completely he was wedded to Cromwell’s interests, and felt but too well that, whichever party might prosper, one brother would have cause to grieve. *He gave him a short sketch of events since their parting ; but to no one, not even to that almost brother, did he speak of the*

presentiment which, mistaken as it perchance might be, still cast its shadow upon him.

Dark clouds were soon to break over that devoted little army. The campaign, from which so much had been expected, was brief, useless, and wanting in its usual brilliancy. The very lustre of its leader's name seemed to hasten its failure. The Parliament, fearful of his renown, sent against him a strong force under Lieutenant-General Strahan, an impetuous setary and valiant officer. He was joined by some troops under the Earl of Sutherland, about five hundred in number, and came up with Montrose near Corbiedale, in Ross-shire. The Royalist army was carelessly guarded, and unconscious of the proximity of the foe. Strahan, however, was averse to fighting on a Sunday, and would not have done so had not a movement of Montrose brought them still nearer together. He then sent two detachments of cavalry to fall upon the Royalist camp. Montrose, taken by surprise, imagined them to be merely the vanguard of a large army, and much confusion prevailed. The Germans fought with great bravery; but the Highlanders, principally from Orkney, and wholly unused to warfare, were quickly put to flight. Montrose, having been several times unhorsed, would at length have been taken prisoner, but was saved by the young Viscount Frenddraught, who dismounted and insisted on his accepting his steed. The Marquis, perceiving that all was lost, then fled from the field, throwing away his jewels and Order of the Garter, and borrowing the dress of a peasant whom he afterwards met. He was soon, however, recognised, and betrayed to General Leslie, who sent him prisoner to Edinburgh. He was soon after tried and executed, with General Urry, Sir Francis Spottiswood, and others, taken prisoners on the same occasion. The Royalist army was now dispersed. The leaders were disheartened and despairing, struck with dismay and horror at the fate of a leader from whom they had hoped such great things, and whom they had well-nigh worshipped. They glanced with one accord to Breda, where Charles the Second still negotiated with the *Parliamentary Commissioners*, amongst whom were the Earls of *Cassilis* and *Lothian*. They had not, however, the power to

*treat.* Their conditions must be accepted *in toto*, and they were hard ones. The King found them so. He was required to banish from his court and army all those nobles and gentlemen who had previously distinguished themselves in his service, whether under Hamilton or Montrose. Further, he must bind himself to take the Covenant, and no English subject who had served against the Parliament must be allowed to approach him. The old clause for the abolition of episcopacy was also an important article, and one of the most difficult for the King to accede to. He was surrounded on all sides by advisers, some taking one view of matters, some another. Most of his English counsellors judged alike. The conditions brought by Lord Cassilis were unfavourable to them, blotting them out, as it were, from all positions, whether of civil or military preferment, all of them having been in some degree involved in the late war. But other interests and sentiments powerfully moved them to oppose the measure. They were mostly devoted to the memory of the King, for whom they had fought and suffered so bravely; for whom many of their friends and kinsmen had laid down their lives. They could not forget that the same conditions had been once made to *him*, and that he had died rather than forsake his friends, or abandon what he considered the interest of the Church, by banishing the lords or by abolishing episcopacy. How, then, could they counsel a son to that measure for the prevention of which a father had suffered death? To forsake the men who had borne so much for him and his seemed, moreover, scarcely honourable in their Prince; and this was his first public act. They were prudent and far-seeing also. They saw that the Scots had offended deeply against their King, and had shown no repentance. They had promised no amendment. Could it be possible that they meant more than they promised? Unheard-of concessions had been made to them before; yet they had twice led armed forces into England. They had sold their King to his enemies. They were under the dominion of the Presbyterians, who had hated the *King*, his family, and his party. Argyle would at the first opportunity join his cause with that of England; and the Royalists,

the only true friends of the King, would by his own deed be infallibly lost to him. It would not look well, they added, for the Prince's first act to be in direct contradiction to the known principles and maxims of his father, and even though his cause were desperate it was not to be redeemed by dishonour.

On the other hand, the young Duke of Buckingham, the friend and favourite of Charles, was urgent that his King should accept the conditions, harsh and exacting as they were. He was joined by many of the Engagers, who, banished for their loyalty to Charles, were now anxious to return to their estates in the retinue of the King. Amongst them were the Earl of Lauderdale, and Laneric, now Duke of Hamilton. It was not until after his arrival in Holland that his brother had shared the fate of his master. He had been received with the greatest kindness and sympathy by Charles, who but a few months before had received a similar shock in the murder of his father; and it was as father rather than as brother that William mourned the kinsman that had been to him his nearest and dearest tie—his guardian and protector since his childhood—and of whom he was wont to say that he had never needed a parent, so loving, so devoted was the care with which he had been reared and educated by him. James had, indeed, bestowed upon his brother a better education and more liberal fortune than had been meted to himself. He had sent him to study abroad the graceful accomplishments that afterwards distinguished him, and had in all ways and at all times watched over his interests and aided his fortunes. He had loved his children equally with his own; and if he had insisted on a marriage, at that time distasteful to him, the Lady Elizabeth Maxwell was a fair and well-dowered heiress, and James's own marriage, happy as it had finally proved, had been yet more despotically arranged.

The remembrance of James's loyal service probably caused King Charles to pay more attention than he might otherwise have done to the counsels of the hot and impulsive William. As we have before had occasion to state, Laneric—or Hamilton, as he must now be called—was impulsive in his combinations and fertile in excusing them. He differed wholly from the

English lords in his answer to the commissioners. He explained away the warnings that they gave, and turned the eloquence and eagerness of his nature to impress upon the King the necessity of submission. Argyle, he said, afraid to reject their Sovereign's claim, had laid a trap for him, that he might *himself* refuse the crown ; that the very dependence upon their honour would please and interest the Scotch in his behalf ; and that, a war with England being inevitable, many would be glad to make common cause with their King ; and finally, that the policy that was expected in a man of mature age and judgment, like his father, could not be looked for from a young and inexperienced prince, in the face of such perplexities and such perils. He and his party (for it must not be supposed that he was the only, or even the principal, supporter of this measure) also persuaded the King that it would be well not to regard the danger, but to think only of his desperate cause, and that in his case his honour lay rather in courage and activity than in questions of theology, of which he could be supposed to know little. The Queen Henrietta and the Prince of Orange also entreated him to accept the conditions ; but it was the fate of Montrose that finally determined him. The Royalists were dispersed, and he had no resource but submission.

It was June when he set sail for England ; and before he was allowed to disembark he was required to sign the covenant as agreed upon. All the Engagers, including Hamilton and Lauderdale, were immediately dismissed, most of them retiring to their estates, where they lived in private, taking no part in the government of the country, but watching their opportunity to rejoin the King. The English nobles were banished from the kingdom. Ernest Heyward, with Edward Leighton and a few others, crossed over to Ireland, in the vain hope of again striking a blow for royalty. The King himself had neither influence nor authority. He had merely the name of monarch, and was forced to submit to many slights and indignities. He *was* consulted neither in civil nor in military affairs. To be his friend was to be an object of hatred and suspicion. 'Engager'

and 'Malignant' continued to be terms of opprobrium with those around him.

Meanwhile England was preparing for war. Cromwell left Ireland to his son-in-law, Ireton, and hastened to take the command. Fairfax, who joined him at Hounslow Heath, was offered the command (under himself) of the northern expedition. Fairfax refused, either by the persuasion of his wife or, as he himself declared, by scruples of conscience, which prevented him from bearing arms against the Covenanters. Cromwell was then declared Captain-general of the army, a position of immense importance, and crossed the Tweed with 16,000 men. Fortune, however, did not at first seem to favour him. The position of the King was meanwhile an equivocal one. He was wholly in the power of those around him. Of his personal friends and followers he had only Buckingham and a few others of the same stamp. The Committee of Estates paid him every homage, but kept him under the strictest surveillance. Argyle, a consummate courtier, bent to him on every occasion, but declined to give or accept confidence. The King was not allowed to be present when affairs of state were discussed, and his leisure hours were filled with religious observances, sermons, and theological discussions, as wearisome to him as to his friends. Meanwhile preparations were made on both sides for war. The Scottish Parliament having adjourned, the Committee of Estates collected some 30,000 men, under the command of General David Leslie, an experienced officer of the Covenanting party. He fortified his camp between Edinburgh and Leith, and removed from the adjoining counties all that could serve for the subsistence of their foes. Aware that, though superior in numbers, he was far inferior in discipline to Cromwell, he resisted every artifice of that General to force him to give battle, and contented himself with occasional skirmishes, to prove the courage and confirm the zeal and loyalty of his men. Then Charles came to the camp, and, distinguishing himself in an action, won to himself the affection of the soldiers, who were proud to follow a young and high-spirited prince. This, however, did not suit the Committee. They hastily withdrew the

monarch from the camp, together with all Malignants. The clergy in particular insisted upon the measure, declaring that an army of saints could not possibly be beaten.

Cromwell now found himself in great perplexity. He had no provisions, and no means of procuring them. Retiring to Dunbar, he was reduced to extremity, as Leslie soon followed, and, taking possession of the difficult passes between that town and Berwick, posted himself on the heights of Lammermoor, overlooking the camp of the English. Cut off from supplies, Cromwell entertained the desperate resolution of sending away his infantry and artillery by sea, and of breaking through with the cavalry ; but the fanaticism of the Covenanters spared him the dishonour. Pretending revelations, they forced Leslie to descend from his position and give battle. The superior discipline of the English prevailed, and a most complete victory was theirs. Edinburgh and Leith were taken, and the Scots fled to Stirling. This ended the campaign for that year.

Charles rejoiced in secret at the victory of the English. It was, indeed, a gain rather than a loss to him. The Committee of Estates, vanquished and humbled, gave him more authority than before. They permitted Hamilton and the other Engagers to flock to his standard, on condition of expressing their repentance for their former exploits. Several Royalists and Malignants, on various pretences, were also allowed to join. Amongst them were Lord Hertford and Ernest Heyward, who came over from Ireland at the first news of an accommodation. Charles proceeded to Scone, where he was crowned with great pomp and solemnity, though still under the surveillance of Argyle. Notwithstanding all this, the Prince's position was well-nigh insupportable. His wit, gaiety, and love of pleasure, his affability, his liberality, and other qualities, were esteemed so many vices by the Covenanters. Buckingham was the only English courtier who was permitted to approach him ; and his love of the ridiculous found continual food in the scene around him. In spite of their policy and courtly dissimulation, the sanctified style was above their efforts, and, forced to attend sermons from morning till night, they made no effort to conceal



their weariness. At last Charles escaped, and tried to join General Middleton, who, proscribed and attainted, was hiding with a few other Royalists. General Montgomery, however, followed the King, and persuaded him to return to the camp, where his position was considerably ameliorated. In the spring Hamilton and Leslie collected another army, which was soon joined by the King, being divided into two parties, the Engagers or Resolutioners and the Protesters, who hated Charles and Cromwell equally. The Scottish army was encamped at Torwood, but were forced to abandon their post, leaving the English forces to their north. Charles then announced his intention of crossing the Border and marching upon England.

This resolution, seconded by the generals and immediately carried into effect, astonished and dismayed Cromwell, who perceived that in his eagerness he had left his friends unprotected. He did not, however, despair. He wrote to the Parliament to make what preparations they could, he himself following Charles, and leaving the reduction of Scotland to General Monk. Charles, on his side, was disappointed in his expectation of finding recruits. The English were indignant at a king being forced upon them by the Scots. The Presbyterians were not ready to join him; whilst the Royalists were deterred from assisting him by the knowledge that they would have to sign the covenant. Lord Derby hastened to Lancashire, and levied what troops he could, but was immediately opposed by the Parliament. The Scotch, unprepared for so hazardous an expedition, fell off in great numbers, and Charles reached Worcester with an army scarcely more numerous than that with which he had quitted Torwood.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

'Men give to dust that is a little gilt  
More laud than they will give to gold o'er dusted.'

SHAKESPEARE.

EXACTLY nine years after Charles I. had erected his standard at Nottingham his son had erected his at Worcester, and issued a proclamation to his subjects to gather round him in the meadows near the city. Only two hundred gentlemen, with their forces, obeyed him. Of these many were from the immediate neighbourhood, and, with the mayor and population of Worcester, had received him on the previous evening with most loyal acclamations. It was, perhaps, the sight of their loyalty and enthusiasm that had dissuaded Charles from his first intention of proceeding immediately to London, and he was considerably disappointed at the paucity of his troops—only 10,000 Scots and 2000 English—wherewith to oppose the enormous levies of the Parliament. The militia, too, of many counties had risen with ardour to repulse the invaders; and Fairfax, at the head of the Yorkshire forces, offered his services to Cromwell, who accepted them, and arrived at Worcester, August 28th, with 24,000 infantry and 10,000 cavalry.

The Royalist army was inferior in numbers. Discontent, ill-will, and discord reigned among its officers, and little disinterested loyalty was to be met with. It was not even decided who was to take the command. The young ambitious Duke of Buckingham had applied for the position, in the place of Leslie, assuring the King that it would be fatal policy to leave the leadership to a Scot. Arrived at Worcester, he urged his demand with still greater importunity. Charles at length lost his temper.

'I cannot believe,' he said, glancing angrily at his troublesome favourite, 'that you are in earnest in your demand, or that you can really consider yourself fit for such a charge.'

'And in what,' retorted Buckingham, 'does your Majesty complain of my want of fitness?'

'You are too young,' replied the King.

‘And yet, sire,’ urged the favourite, ‘Henry the Fourth of France commanded an army and won a battle when he was younger than I am.’

And forthwith he persisted so earnestly that the King was obliged to assure him that he would be his own generalissimo.

This contention did no good to the Royal army. Buckingham, vexed and disappointed, would neither attend the Council nor speak to the King, nor did he recover from his ill-humour whilst the army was at Worcester. Leslie, who had shown himself a brave and experienced officer, now became gloomy and dispirited, and his despondency communicated itself to his friends. He hated Middleton, who, notwithstanding his hasty temper, was much beloved by the soldiery, and possessed their entire confidence. Massey had been grievously wounded a few days before; and Charles was employed in reconciling his officers, and had little hope of success. Cromwell was meanwhile informed of everything that passed.

It was evening, and from the higher ground near the town Ernest Heyward and Edward Leighton looked down upon the mansion of Edgeleigh. It was a clear calm September evening. The foe were in sight. Four days before, on the very morning of his arrival, Cromwell had despatched a large body of troops, under Lambert, to the right bank of the Severn; since then no movement of importance had been observed; and the Royalist officers strolled idly about, or gathered in small groups to discuss the probabilities of a siege. The prospect was discouraging. Nothing was ready for a defence; the town was unprotected, and although fortifications were talked of, nothing decisive had as yet been attempted; while the reconnoitring parties brought intelligence that Cromwell was meditating an attack.

The King held levées and talked with his counsellors, and granted commissions to the few recruits who now and then dropped in to join the Royal cause. General Leslie deplored in secret in his tent. The Earl of Derby went back into Lancashire to collect any stragglers from the army who might have remained behind. Middleton did what he could, and left the remainder to Providence.

Edward, Ernest, and a few other officers strolled, as we have said, to a little distance from the town. It had been a sultry day, and the cool breeze of the evening was certainly tempting. Even General Leslie remembered that he could deplore and prophesy as conveniently in the open air, and in the society of his friends; and as Middleton, having finished the duties of the day, sauntered thoughtfully past his tent, he joined him, and fell into a discussion on the probabilities of success or defeat.

The younger officers ascended a gentle elevation, and looked down on the scene before them. Far, very far away, and again close before them, a thread of silver marked the passage of the Severn, and white cottages were dotted over the turf, just where the little town of Malvern stands to-day. It was a pretty scene, but it was spread before men who had but little taste or inclination for such peaceful beauty. Had these fertile fields been desecrated by war—had the setting sun, peeping from behind the clouds, looked down on the stir and storm of the battle-field, and the purple light of the sunset cast its parting splendours over waving banners and glittering spears—each of those who now sauntered to and fro on the small hillside, each eye now fixed abstractedly on the silent but living picture would have flashed bright with enthusiasm, and each voice would have shouted again and again the battle-cry of the Stuarts.

Now it was not so. Even the two whose glance rested most earnestly upon the scene thought little of its beauty. The mansion, the time-worn ivy-grown mansion in the distance alone riveted their gaze; for those walls contained all, or almost all, that earth held beloved to either. They did not speak, but each gazed in silence until Lord Hertford joined them.

‘You are looking so earnestly at yon mansion, my young friend,’ he said, with a suddenness that caused Ernest to start, ‘that I could almost fancy you were meditating how far it would stand a siege, or shelter your Sovereign in the case of a defeat.’

‘And if he had thought so,’ said Leslie before Ernest could reply, ‘he would have been but providing for an emergency which is, I fear me, too probable. Yon mansion is, moreover,

far fitter for the purpose than is Pickersleigh, where his Majesty will this evening sleep.'

'Really, General Leslie,' cried the Duke of Buckingham, whose proud and impetuous temperament could not endure the possibility of a defeat, or indeed of aught else than a glorious victory being named before him, 'your constant auguries would bring us ill-luck were our Generals twice as good, and our troops a score of times as numerous.'

'And if they were so numerous,' said Leslie mournfully, 'they would not succeed in their endeavours whilst there is this want of unity. I know that the success of Cromwell is owing to the regularity and discipline of his troops rather than to their strength and courage. I *know* it.'

'One would think General Leslie would keep his having served against us in the shade,' said a voice behind them; 'but, contrarywise, he boasts of it on every possible occasion. He had better follow Lord Holland's example, and trust to luck that a better fate betide him.'

At this last remark Leslie turned abruptly. Ernest Heyward was beside him, his eye still fixed on the far-off turrets of his home; and the calm, unmoved, yet withal mischievous glance of Colonel Seymour met that of Leslie with the coolest unconcern. The General bit his lip and turned away, though for a moment a contemptuous smile wreathed his lips, speedily lost again in his usual stern mournful stillness of expression.

A silence of some minutes followed; then Hertford turned to Ernest, and asked him the name of the mansion which seemed so powerfully to interest him.

'Edgeleigh Manor, my lord—my home,' replied Ernest. 'Had the times been more peaceful, I had asked for leave to visit it. At present I cannot even wish to do so.'

'You are a good soldier; you would not desert your banner: but if we are victorious, I will get you leave of absence. What thinks his grace of Hamilton? Ah, me! the title sounds familiar, though the person fits it strangely. You smile, Seymour. *Have you no kind memory of our lamented comrade and commander?*'

'I have,' returned Seymour. 'I can remember that he forgave Colonel Heyward his duel; and that is perhaps more than the present Duke would do. It would not be politic, however, to show preference so openly; and therefore, with your leave, I'll keep silence. His grace seems to be highly in favour at present, more so, men say, than was his brother; yet in sooth, had his head been but equal to his heart, one could scarcely have had a better General. How he hated Montrose too!'

'Then all the more generous was his espousal of his cause,' replied Hertford gravely. 'And, Seymour, when you speak of *either* of those gallant but ill-fated men, I recommend you to do so with respect.'

'I thank you for your advice, *beau sire*, and rest assured that I shall follow it. Yet I knew not it was treason to speak disparagingly of Montrose. Ask General Leslie.'

A flush rose to the General's cheek—a flush partly of pain, partly the consequence of the meaning and sarcastic tone of his comrade, but he did not hesitate.

'He was a brave man, a very brave man, and had much that was noble and admirable about him. Yet mark me, Lord Hertford, he did more harm to our—hem!—to Cromwell's party than he ever did good to his own cause.'

'Just so; a meteor passes through the earth and destroys all it touches, but I never heard of any good effect to the atmosphere,' said Seymour. 'He was decidedly brilliant, and he was undoubtedly loyal, accomplished too, graceful, and courtier-like, but his tastes were peculiar. He detested Duke Hamilton, and he worshipped Prince Rupert.'

'Well, he was not alone in his choice,' said General Leslie. 'Prince Rupert was a man after his own heart, I doubt not, but then he was the idol of the army as well.'

'And Hamilton?' said Hertford.

'Was so different a man that it were hard to compare them—the one hot and impulsive, the other cool and cautious; the one ever sanguine, the other doubtful of himself; the one *brilliantly* successful, the other usually unfortunate.'

'Nay, nay, I think not you can lay that to his charge,' said

Hertford. 'Had he had a fair chance he might have been successful; but he had not.'

'They were great friends, you know, Leslie,' said Seymour mischievously. 'Well, some people like to be ruled, and others like to rule them. It would not be so easy to rule me.'

'I think you find it difficult to rule *yourself*, Seymour,' replied Hertford; 'but say on about Duke Hamilton. I should like to hear your opinion, if it be a true one.'

'I thank you for your courtesy, and will comply with your request. I consider our late General as a very brave soldier, but an inefficient commander; possessed of great personal courage, but diffident of himself. You know very well, Hertford,' he added, 'how easily he was biased by the opinion of those around him.'

'I have heard,' said Leslie, 'that he somewhat resembled Lord Fairfax in character: active and daring in war, but indolent, credulous, and easily led on by all or every one who endeavoured to lead him. In fine, a mere automaton in the hands of others.'

'Of whom speak you in such severe terms?' said Sir James Turner. 'Surely not of Duke Hamilton? Nay, then, will you not hear *my* testimony, who was with him until he was a prisoner, and who know at least better than does General Leslie?'

'By all means,' replied that General. 'I do not bear malice against his grace, I assure you; judging him mostly by the opinions of others. Do you say that you saw him a prisoner?'

'I saw him at Uttoxeter,' replied Sir James, 'where we were led through its streets, having been captured with him. We made stand at the window of the Duke's chamber; and he looking out, we took our eternal farewell of him with sad hearts, parting from him we were never to see again. He spoke kindly to us; and so we left him to act the last and worst part of his tragedy. And I tell you,' he added, 'that this unfortunate lord was a person of excellent qualities, of a great understanding and good experience; *courteous*, affable, humane; so merciful, that he was *not* a bad justiciary, which I thought was a blemish in him—

one of the best masters to vassals and tenants which our kingdom affords.\*

'I agree with you,' said Hertford warmly; 'and so, I am convinced, will all who really knew him.'

'Amen,' said a voice behind him; and turning, he beheld the Duke of Hamilton.

'It is all very well,' said Seymour boldly; 'but if you will all make a hero of Hamilton, what do you think of his accusers—of Montrose?'

'Let them be,' said Hamilton gravely. 'They are gone where strife and discord enter not, and where'—he paused, and looked mournfully towards the horizon, where the sun was sinking in a cloudy field of crimson—'and where many of us may be gone before another sun has set, gone for ever.'

For ever, responded the echo; and silence fell upon the group, startled by the words of Hamilton, who, though he himself entertained the most gloomy forebodings, had hitherto been foremost in cheering his comrades with hopes of success. Had they been otherwise than intimate friends he had not so spoken now.

Seymour was, as usual, the first to find his voice:

'My lord Duke and General Leslie, you are the very spirits of gloom!' he exclaimed, with a laugh. 'It's a wonder that either one was not made chaplain to General Cromwell. Few could give a better homily on the instability of earthly grandeur and the shortness of human life.'

Hamilton glanced at him a moment in silent displeasure, but there was something awfully solemn in the stillness of the evening, and he moved slowly towards the camp. Leslie also turned to follow him. Edward Leighton looked from him to Ernest as he said:

'General Leslie at least thinks but mournfully of our cause. Mark him, how grave and cold!'

'Yes, mark him well,' said the young Cavalier, as he turned for one last glance at his home. 'He is a good though a stern and mournful-hearted man, and his hand and heart are alike engaged in a good cause. His glance is cold, his words are few,

\* His own words.



but I love to believe he is sincere. His religion is a gloomy one. He has no confidence in his followers, and his fate he may perchance fancy predestined. Still he is right at heart; and we will ponder on his grave looks and on the words of one who is not wont to fancy evil: "ere another sun is set, some or all of us may be gone for ever."

And the echo, repeating, as it sometimes is wont to do, some particular sentence, though all others fall unanswered on the air, clearly and distinctly replied:

'For ever!'

The officers had turned away. Edward also was gone; and yet Ernest lingered, as though his home, gloomy and indistinct in the twilight, was yet possessed of an invincible attraction for him, a magnetic power that chained him to the spot.

'Tarry yet an instant, Colonel Heyward,' said a faltering voice, 'Though the air be cauld and damp wi' dew, and the glow-worm's kindling her wee paling light, tarry and listen to the voice of one with whom thyself and race are nae like other men.'

The tone, the mixture of Scotch and English pronunciation, came back to Ernest as in a dream; and as he glanced hurriedly round, his eager eye fell upon the sharp and wonderfully aged features of the Scottish seer. To our hero she seemed the same as ever—the same picturesque brightness of attire, the same decrepit yet venerable form, the same hair of silver gray, the same gleaming dark eyes, only still more weird-like and still more ancient than before. Her quick glance was upon him; she marked every shade upon his features, every look of pensive thought that gleamed from beneath his dark lashes, every flush of colour that passed across his face—the look of manly pride that had lent its impress to his boyish enthusiasm—and she sighed. Ernest turned his eyes inquiringly upon her, but she did not speak. He need not, however, have feared to interrupt her. That fixed look was now no vacant gazing into futurity, but the gaze of earnest and deep affection, and she half smiled as she said:

'*I am nae gane yet, Ernest Heyward, albeit I deemed my*

end waur nigh. I maun see to th' end o' th' dream, and then may be I shall gae. Did I nae say well?' she continued. 'The midnight wedding, the stormy life—do ye not believe me now?'

'I do believe you,' replied Colonel Heyward, as he half turned away, and glanced anxiously towards the horizon. 'Your prophecy *has* weighed upon my mind with a certainty that is almost real. It has foreshadowed to me my fate, and I have accepted it.'

'It is well, Ernest Heyward,' answered the seer. 'Once again, it is well. Yet hope even while ye fear; or rather, hope on and fear not. Mind ye not, the dream waur broken, but a light waur shining through th' cloud.'

'Yes, mother; but it may be the glory of heaven after the strife is over,' said Ernest; and he again turned towards her with a smile.

'And it may be glory on earth also,' she said; 'and it *will* be so. Farewell then for a time—farewell, but na for ever. Fear not, young soldier, though the storm will sune be breaking; there's a light shining through the cloud.'

She waved her hand and left him, and Ernest watched in silence her retreating form until it was lost in the distance. Then he turned to go. As he did so, the sun sank behind the horizon—sank amid the clouds of crimson, to give place to the stars of the night. On the morrow it would rise again, and rise over the battle of Worcester.

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## CHAPTER XXV.

'The sands are number'd that make up my life.'

SHAKESPEARE.

WE must now return for a brief space to Edgeleigh. Many months had passed since we beheld the last parting of Ernest and his father—a parting witnessed by Charles. Since then, Ernest, as we have seen, had been fighting bravely, both in

Ireland and in England, under Ormond, Clanricarde, and Montrose. Charles on his side had not been idle ; he had followed the fortunes of Cromwell, and had been with him at Dunbar. He was almost as popular with the Roundheads as Ernest with the Royalists, and their praises were sweet to their father as he sat day by day at his quiet fireside, listening to the accounts of the war, as related to him by Ruth and Alice. The brothers had met but once since the commencement of Ernest's military life, but the affectionate remembrance of their childhood had not, as we have seen, been forgotten. Their rival squadrons had been engaged in different parts of the country, and they had been usually spared the hard task of fighting against each other. Each had in turn visited his home ; but whilst Charles was well known to high and low, and not only known but beloved, for he was of a gentler and kinder mould than most of those with whom he was now obliged to associate, Ernest was known but to few ; for his visits had been seldom, and it was only through cautious uncertain communications from one tried and faithful dependent to another that his arrival or departure could be conjectured. But none had forgotten the fair-haired fearless boy of bygone years, and few could look on his beautiful young wife without loving her ; and when they knelt at their morning and evening devotions, there were few hearts around Edgeleigh that did not call down a blessing upon both.

Ruth was now a sedate quiet young woman of four-and-twenty. The long months that had passed over her head since we last saw her had neither ruffled the unimpassioned calm of her spirit, nor cast a shadow of care over her serene fair brow. Perchance she was really a little less proud, a little less sanctified, a little less devoted to the hymns and counsels of the pious George Gottenberg ; but her outward aspect was the same as ever.

Alice was now a beautiful young creature of nineteen. Her face was a shade paler, and her eyes grew sweeter and more pensive as she grew older. Her position was a sad one, but it was ameliorated by the buoyancy of her disposition and the bright

visions of the future in which she was still wont to indulge.

\* \* \* \* \*

And now Master Heyward was dying ; his health had long been sinking, and the sands of life were ebbing away fast and silently. Charles and Ruth were beside him, but the younger son was far away, unconscious, amid his toils and struggles, that the succeeding hour would make him fatherless. Yet, distant and apart, Ernest was not forgotten. Perhaps it would be truer to say that it was that very distance that made him in that hour dearer to his father's heart, dearer than even *he* had been before. Who has not known the anguish, the silent ceaseless sorrow of a parting that may be for ever—a sorrow that grows deeper as time flies onward and hope grows fainter ; but one, too, that increases the affections and draws the hearts that share it nearer and nearer together ? With such an affection as this Master Heyward had of late years regarded Ernest ; and now, when the last prayers were said, when the last words of love and blessing to his children were uttered, and the stamp of death was on his brow, his thoughts reverted to his lost but loved Ernest, and raising his hands towards heaven, he invoked one special blessing on his head, and these were his last words.

All was over ; the sorrowing mourners had left the chamber of death and sought the privacy of their apartments—all save one. Alice alone remained by the bedside, kissing the pale cold hand of the departed, of him who had been to her almost as a father. Her tears fell heavily, and her hands were clasped in prayer ; yet her thoughts were not all of sorrow. Gratitude and thanksgiving had filled her heart ; and well they might, for the prayers of years had been granted, and Master Heyward had died a Catholic. He had given his fondest blessing to Ernest and to Alice, and he had blessed their cause with his approval.

The door opened softly, and Charles entered. His face was pale, but his step was firm and his voice calm and composed, *as he approached his adopted sister, and entreated her to leave the apartment. He had arrived there when all was well-nigh*

over. He knew not the change that had been wrought in those last days in the old man's spirit; he knew not of his newly-adopted faith; and well it was perhaps that he did not, for the house of death and sorrow is no place for such feelings as that knowledge would have called forth. Alice rose at his wish, and casting one long last look on the calm face of the dead, followed him to the parlour. Ruth was there already; and Major Heyward sat down beside her, while Alice threw herself into her arms and wept bitterly. Charles looked sadly upon them, and then, taking a hand of each, said gently and firmly,

'Ruth and Alice, my sweet sisters, we have lost a kind and indulgent father, and verily our hearts are sorrowful. We are alone and orphans, and the loved ones of our hearth are scattered. Difference of opinion hath divided us, yet, I trust, hath not diminished our affection for each other. Ernest, our dearly beloved brother, and thy husband, sweet Alice, is far away, and we know not when he will again stand among us. Our father and mother have left us. I alone remain to you; and yet to-morrow I too must leave you, to resume the duties of a soldier and a patriot. Dearest Ruth, my heart is sad to forsake thee. Yet why should I fear for thee, seeing that thou art of the number of the righteous? But for Alice I do fear, and for Ernest,—God bless and preserve them both! Take care of thy poor sister, Ruth; she is too young and frail a thing to struggle unaided with the storms of life. Alice, be advised, and hearken to thine elders, and seal these mutual bonds with a sister's kiss.'

The sisters fondly embraced; and Alice, as she received Charles's kind brotherly kiss upon her brow, forced herself to calmness, and left the room to write the sad tidings to her husband.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

'Some found their grave where first they stood,  
And some with hardier struggle died.' MOORE.

It was the morning of the third of September—a day to be long remembered in fair England with mingled bitterness and exultation, dividing her children one from the other, and mingling the cries of victory with the groans of defeat. All night long, troops of Cromwell's army had been crossing the river and taking silent possession of the right bank, commanded by Fleetwood. Their instructions were to attack the town on the one side, whilst Cromwell and the main body advanced on the other. So cautious, however, were their movements, so ill-informed were the Royalist generals, that, while aware of the vicinity of their foes, they had no expectation of an immediate attack.

At one o'clock in the afternoon they were still leisurely pursuing their accustomed duties, when a band of Cromwell's soldiers crossed the river by the bridge of boats, and marched against Major-General Montgomery, who, with some Scotch regiments, was guarding the approaches to the city.

The alarm was given by the King, who, standing with his staff on the cathedral tower to enjoy the beauty of the prospect, was the first to notice their advance. He at once gave orders for the prompt muster and arrangement of the forces, and placing himself at the head of a troop, hastened in person to the assistance of the General. The extreme of bustle and confusion took the place of the previous inaction. The streets rapidly filled. Messengers passed to and fro between the different quarters as rapidly as the fast thickening crowd would permit, and officers and men were quickly on the alert. Colonel Heyward, whose tent was in that quarter of the camp furthest removed from the scene of conflict, was one of the last to take the alarm. A soldier had brought him, some half-hour previous, a packet of letters, with the contents of which he had been since engaged. They were mostly on military matters,

and, it seemed, of an unsatisfactory nature, for he crushed them in his hand, and put them impatiently aside after a hasty perusal. The last letter, however, called up a greater amount of interest, and opening it more carefully, he prepared to bestow on it the eager attention which a delicate missive in his wife's pretty handwriting might be supposed to claim. As his eye glanced over the first lines, the smile with which he had greeted its appearance fled from his features, and gave place to a deep sadness, whilst the ashy paleness of emotion overspread his countenance. He laid the letter upon the table, and gazed abstractedly upon it; presently a word caught his eye, and he snatched it eagerly and read it hastily through, a strange hope dawning in his heart.

Yes; thou art right, Ernest. Thy sorrow hath been mingled with joy, and thy affliction hath been tempered with mercy. He whom thou hast lost is indeed departed, but the Church hath set her seal upon him, and the waters of regeneration have been poured upon his brow. Thy father hath died a Catholic.

A look of fervent gratitude passed over Colonel Heyward's countenance, and again he read those few hurried lines. Once he pressed them to his lips, and then, folding the letter carefully, placed it next his heart. Then, and not till then, did he give full vent to his grief: seating himself by the table, bowing his face upon his hands, he indulged in that profound but tearless sorrow which characterised his proud but sensitive nature. He thought of the deep love his father had ever shown him; the almost partial fondness with which he had been treated by him, as the youngest and frailest of the family; he thought also of his idolised Alice, and noted the deep grief and deeper love with which she broke to him the mournful tidings; and then again came the thought that sent a dash of joy into his sadness, and thrilled through his heart like a thrill of most sweet music—like the echo of a solemn and distant hymn—that though in death they were divided, one Church, one faith, one baptism, now at last, and for the first time, united them. It seemed scarcely *separation* when he thought of this in the great glad *hope of a future meeting*, and as again and again he repeated

to himself those consoling words, such an ocean of loving gratitude was in his soul that, overpowered by the feelings it engendered, the young Royalist flung himself on his knees in the silence of his tent, and pressing his cross-hilted sword to his lips with a fervour and earnestness unknown till then, poured forth his thanks to God for the great mercy bestowed upon him. He was roused by a quick step outside, and Edward Leighton entered, his face so radiant with enthusiasm, and his whole expression so forcibly recalling the features of his sister, that Ernest started with surprise.

‘To arms ! to arms !’ cried Edward, too eager and excited to mark the unusual depression of his friend. ‘Cromwell is upon us, and the King is already to the fore. Why, what ails thee, Ernest ? Hast no word for thy wife’s brother ?’

‘I am ready, Edward,’ answered the Colonel calmly, as he stepped into the open air. ‘To arms, say you ? Ah, now I hear the sound of musketry. My horse, Hargreaves. Come, Edward, which will strike the first blow for his Majesty ?’

‘We will both do our best. But stay—wait a bit ; here comes one of our party, doubtless with orders from the Duke. Haste, haste, Stanley ! We would know where duty calls us. In what quarter is the Duke ?’

‘Colonel Heyward and Major Leighton,’ said Stanley breathlessly, ‘lead your troops at once to the western suburb, to assist his Majesty. I will myself bear the tidings to Generals Middleton and Leslie. The Duke is already with the King.’

And he was gone before another question could be asked.

Before, however, Ernest’s troop was ready the King himself was seen approaching. He courteously returned the two officers’ salutations, and repeated his orders for them to attend him as soon as possible. Hamilton, who was with him, stopped to give further particulars.

‘His Majesty,’ he said, ‘will return hither as soon as he has assembled the other members of his staff. He believes that Cromwell himself is with his chief force in the west ; and would *fain seize* the rebel camp in his absence : but the plan is *hazardous.*’



'Do you think it will succeed?' asked Edward.

'I fear not; I look to a defeat. Divided as we are, there is little hope of our success,' said the Duke, in a despondent tone, glancing hastily round as he spoke. There were none near but Edward and Ernest, both brave officers and friends. He laid his hand earnestly on the shoulder of the latter and continued: 'I have long foreseen the catastrophe that now approaches, and mark me, I desire not to outlive it.\*'

He ceased abruptly, for others were approaching, and he resumed his usual cheerfulness.

'Forward, men, for our King!' he said; and then he rode to overtake his sovereign.

'This is bad, very bad, Ernest,' said Edward, as they prepared to mount and follow. 'When Hamilton, bold, reckless, and impulsive, despairs, we may consider our cause as hopeless. But let us not fight less hard for that; let us do our duty in the face of despondency, or even of despair. We shall never regret that we have done so.'

'Indeed no. We will fight for King Charles as long as we have breath to struggle or sword to fight with,' said Ernest warmly. 'See, yonder is his Majesty; let us not lose sight of him.'

They mounted and rode off; but the streets were now too full to admit of their moving quickly, and they resumed their disconnected conversation even whilst they endeavoured to notice each movement of the King.

'I think we shall have a hard fight,' said Ernest, as he marked the eager and excited faces of the soldiers, the stern decision of the generals, the gallant bearing of the young King himself, and heard the distant crash of the artillery as Cromwell gained slowly but steadily upon them.

'A hard fight, Ernest? I fear we are not united enough for that. No order, no discipline, and pressed by a foe thrice as numerous as ourselves. Yet we have some loyal hearts amongst us—the Duke and Middleton and Leslie, not counting our un-

\* His own words.

worthy selves, who would yet risk all that we possess in the service of the Stuart. A hard fight indeed, Ernest. Heaven grant it may be !'

'Well, hard or not, Edward, it will be a bloody one, and one or both of us may fall. If we meet no more, remember Alice. Tell her\* my parting messages were addressed to her ; that my last blessing was on her head, her name the last earthly one that passed my lips, and that I died as I have lived, a true adherent of King Charles. And now farewell, Edward, for our ways lie apart.'

He wrung the hand which the young officer extended to him, held it a moment in his own, and then slowly relinquished it. But Edward lingered yet another moment beside him.

'One word with you, Ernest, and then indeed good-bye, though I trust for a few hours only. I am going to join the Duke, and shall be far from you in the fight. I am an older soldier than you are, Ernest, and my experience is greater ; therefore be guided at least in part by my suggestions. Whatever happens, *keep close to King Charles*. No matter how shameful the retreat or how mistaken the movement, keep close to his Majesty and lead him into safety, and you at least will have done your duty. Middleton and the Duke must mind the rest. You understand me ?

'Yes, and I will not fail.'

And with another warm grasp of the hand the two friends parted. Each went bravely to his post, resolved to battle bravely for his King and cause ; and ever through the confusion of the fight Edward saw the white plumes of Ernest waving by his sovereign's side.

On leaving Edward, Ernest at once joined the King, at the head of the small troop of cavalry that he commanded, and learned from him the order of battle. They passed out together at the eastern gate and attacked the Roundhead camp, which they hoped to find unguarded. Cromwell had, however, unexpectedly returned there, and now charged them gallantly. Everything was at once in confusion. The Royalists had rushed to battle but half prepared, startled, bewildered, and their troo

in disorder; but their King was with them, and his courage animated theirs. Part of Cromwell's troops were repulsed, abandoning their artillery. Leslie came up behind the King with some three thousand Scotch cavalry. These received orders to push on and pursue their advantage; but for some reason unknown to us and to his soldiers the General remained motionless, a silent spectator of the ever-increasing confusion.

'O for one hour of Montrose!' cried the English Royalists; and at the word Hamilton and Sir John Douglas charged desperately and bravely. But Cromwell had already rallied his troops, and the two brave Royalists fell mortally wounded. The Royal cavalry were at the same time surrounded and almost entirely destroyed; and the infantry, discouraged by their fate and the failure of their ammunition, slowly retreated. Cromwell, on the contrary, was full of confidence, and well and gallantly supported. He was ever at the head of his troops, cheering and encouraging them; and now attacked the Fort Royal, which, being one of the chief protections of the city on that side, was defended by eighteen hundred men. It was bravely defended, but was at last taken and the garrison put to the sword. This completed the discouragement of the Royalists. The fight was now carried on hand to hand. The city gates were reached; they were blocked up by an ammunition wagon that had been overturned in the confusion, and Charles was obliged to dismount and enter the city on foot, the Roundhead troops following him through the breach, Ernest and other officers keeping close beside him. In the centre of the town they were met by Montgomery's flying troops, which were in turn pursued by Fleetwood. It was a scene of frightful carnage and confusion, intermixed, however, with brilliant heroism and touching self-devotion. Charles, again mounted, strove in vain to rally his troops; they were wholly downcast and dispirited, and responded not to the entreaties of their sovereign.

'Then shoot me dead, rather than let me live to see the sad consequences of this day!' he cried passionately. But as he spoke Lord Cleveland and some fifty others formed themselves into a compact body and again charged the rebels, thus covering

their monarch's retreat. He left Worcester by St. Martin's Gate, and soon came up with some of Leslie's flying troops. For a moment he would fain have rallied them; but he knew that men who had deserted him when in good order would never stand by him in panic and confusion. So, followed by sixty Cavaliers, and accompanied by Ernest and Lord Wilmott, he pursued his way north under cover of the night.

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

'Without one word to mark our long good-bye.' BUTLER.

THE evening was closing in; Ruth and Alice had just arisen from their evening meal, which since their bereavement had been served to them in the parlour, and of which the remains were as yet unremoved from the table. Neither was the lamp lit; but the flashes from the wood fire flickered and blazed fitfully, casting a changeful glimmer over the figures of the two girls, and bringing out the fair pale faces into distinct relief against the gloomy surroundings of the rapidly-darkening room.

Their faces, so seen, were somewhat sad, and the heavy mourning garments bore tokens of a recent and deep affliction. The songs that had once flowed so readily from the lips of Alice were now unheard, and the silence was unbroken save by the hasty clicking of Ruth's needles and the ticking of the old-fashioned clock above the chimneypiece. Presently Alice rose and approached the window, which she threw open, admitting a sudden gush of cold air, which caused Ruth to shiver and draw nearer to the fire, but drew from her neither remonstrance nor remark. It was a wild night, dark and chilly; the wind wailed mournfully among the trees; the branches swayed to and fro and snapped asunder; and the heavy raindrops pattered thick and fast upon the stone terrace and sheltering eaves, and into the very face of the young Royalist, as she leant unheeding from the window.

'Tis a dark night, Ruth,' she said, as she returned to her

place ; ' but I do not hear those dreadful muskets, and I cannot see those red flashes of the artillery, as we could some hours since. Ruth, it must be frightful over there ! It makes me cold to think of it.'

' Ah, Heaven help them ! 'Tis an awful life that they have chosen ; and, Royalist or Righteous, they have much to fear and much to suffer. Alice, child, I would that we had news of Charles and Ernest. Know ye if thy husband is at Worcester ?'

Alice shivered at the thought that perhaps he might be.

' When last I heard he was in Cheshire, with Lord Derby ; but, Ruth, thou knowest that was days since. Still, if at Worcester, we should surely have seen something of him.'

Ruth did not answer ; she knew that, at a time like this—the two armies close together—Ernest could not easily have obtained permission to absent himself, even had he thought fit to ask it. But she did not say this to Alice ; she wished her to believe the best ; and the best, Ruth felt, would be that he was far away. She had laid down her work whilst her sister spoke, but she now resumed it, and relapsed into her sad thoughts ; whilst Alice knelt by her side, gazing abstractedly into the dying embers, and picturing amongst them the wildest dreams of her young and fertile fancy. Strange to say, hope had never beamed more brightly before her ; her husband's triumph had never seemed so brilliant or so certain as on the night which, though she knew it not, was to mark the very crisis of his fate. The dying words of Edith Heyward flashed vividly to her remembrance ; the dark weird countenance of the Scottish seer, with her glance of prophetic hopefulness and her words of ringing exultation, seemed actually beside her, when—as so many times before in those stormy days—a loud noise was heard suddenly in the hall, the clanging of bolts and bars, the mingling of voices in hurried question and reply ; and then the door of the apartment was flung suddenly open, and two Royalists stood, unannounced, before them, their dresses travel-stained, and the disorder of their whole attire betokening a hasty and perchance disastrous flight.

The foremost of the fugitives was tall and slight, with a peculiar gracefulness in his person and deportment; though the drooping hat and feather and the gloom of the apartment prevented his features from being distinctly seen. His companion was considerably his inferior in stature and general appearance, but his attire was more gorgeous, and he returned a half haughty, half-winning courtesy to the deferential eagerness of the young officer by his side. All this was seen at a glance; and the two sisters had risen hastily to their feet, and Ruth in faltering accents addressed the intruders, before either had found breath to speak.

‘I perceive,’ she said, glancing towards her unbidden guests ‘that ye are fugitives from the Royal army. Ye are thus opposed to our holy cause, and have taken upon ye the yoke of the Philistine. Heaven knoweth that I mean rightly, and never shall it be said that Ruth Heyward turned away her head or opened not her hand to the unfortunate and needy. Therefore, I pray ye—’

‘Thanks, maiden, for thy courtesy,’ answered a well-known voice; and with a glad eager cry Alice rushed forward and threw herself into the stranger’s arms—it was her husband. He held her to him for an instant—a moment of unalloyed happiness, to be, alas! too swiftly followed by a cloud.

‘Mine own wife! mine own Elsie! look up, that I may see thy face. And thou too, Ruth; my heart hath hungered for you both.’

But even as her hand touched his he turned with a sudden impulse or remembrance to his companion.

‘Pardon me, my liege,’ he said respectfully, ‘for having in the first moment’s gladness, forgotten what was due to you. Permit my wife to tender her allegiance to your Majesty.’

But Alice, with a start of surprise, had already thrown herself at the feet of the King and kissed the hand which he extended to her.

‘Rise, Mistress Heyward, if so we must address you; we claim not such homage from so fair a dame,’ said the King courteously, as he raised the lovely enthusiast, who continued

to express her devotion to his cause in terms which, notwithstanding his precarious position, brought a smile of satisfaction to his face, even whilst catching a reproof from the grave lips of Mistress Ruth :

‘Prithee, Mistress Alice, be silent in the presence of him thou callest thy King. It becometh thee better to restrain thy speech in the presence of thy superiors.’

‘Thy words are of wisdom, Ruth,’ said her brother, though he gazed fondly the while upon his young wife. ‘Neither have we time to spare, for our pursuers may even now be nigh at hand, and meanwhile we would seek rest, food, and shelter at thy hands.’

‘Pursued, sayest thou ? O Ernest !’

The cry came from Alice, who, now pale as death, threw her arms round her husband, as though to protect him from the approaching danger, if need be, with her own frail life. He put her aside with a word of gentle reassurance.

‘We are pursued indeed, Alice, but I trust that we have for a while at least outwitted the enemy. They lost us at the cross-road, and by leaping a broken fence and riding across country we have at least lengthened the distance between us, even should they fall eventually upon our tracks.’

‘Then were it not best to pursue your advantage without delay ?’ said Ruth, breathing more freely.

‘Not so, for the enemy are scattered abroad. His Majesty’s horse hath fallen lame, and though mine were readily at his service, he knows not without guidance the private paths which could alone avail him.’

‘But the horses—where are they ? The sight of them will betray you,’ said Alice hurriedly.

‘They are not here ; they are tethered in the thick clump beyond the western gate. You will see to them, dearest, for should we escape it must be on foot ; and Fero was *thy* gift. I would not lose him.’

‘We will see to all, for thy sake ; but thou—thou, Ernest—how can we help thee ?’

‘In this house thou art safe, thou and thy friend,’ said

Ruth calmly. 'Our soldiers will scarcely seek for a Royalist in the house of one of our holy cause.'

'Yes, maiden, when commanded, as may be, by the zealous Obadiah. Methinks his very hatred of me would quicken his sight, and sharpen his understanding.'

'Indeed, indeed, then I know not how to aid thee,' said Ruth sorrowfully. 'Verily, my good brother, thou hast placed me in a strange strait. But my heart is truly inclined towards thee, and I will do all in my power to help thee. Meanwhile, if ye are in need of refreshment, it is ready to your hand; eat, and welcome; and do thou, Alice, hasten to thy chamber, and put off thy Royalist attire, lest the presence of a Malignant endanger thy husband and thy guest. Hist! I will lend thee my Sunday gown and my best starched cap.'

'We shall sorrow to see such abundant tresses hidden beneath the close cap of a Puritan,' said the King gallantly; 'but never yet did fair lady don such attire for better motive.'

Alice did not reply. Casting one loving lingering look upon her husband, and making a deep reverence to the King, she raised the curtain that concealed the entrance to her room, and disappeared. In a moment she returned, bringing with her two candles, which she placed upon the table.

The two fugitives, at Ruth's renewed request, then seated themselves together at the board—ceremony being for the moment forgotten in the urgency of their position—and partook of the fare placed before them with the appetites of men who had fasted long, and who knew not when or where they might next look for food or shelter. Ernest was the first to speak.

'I know not how this last move may help us, my liege, if so it be that my brother should command this troop. The very change in his sister's dress would but awaken his suspicions.'

'But thy brother surely would keep thy counsel?'

'I fear not, my liege: his zeal is no less ardent than his affection. Besides, your Majesty, he knows not that 'tis his brother whom he thus pursueth to the death.'

'You are quite sure that the colours of the troop were *to his?*' said Charles reflectively.



'A man who was of old his follower bears the same,' said Ernest. 'But we will hope he comes not.' Then, as the King rose from the table with a word of thanks, 'Weep not, dear Ruth, but tell us quickly in what manner canst thou aid us.'

'Have the servants seen thee?' she questioned.

'Some of them, of necessity. The door was fastened and barred, and we were forced to summon them; but fear not: they recognised me, and would none of them betray their master's brother. The King they knew not, which is well; and they will hold him sacred for my sake. What dost thou propose, Ruth?'

'I know but one way,' she answered; 'but it may serve thee. If thou and thy friend be careful, all may yet be well with ye. Ernest, thou knowest the secret panel, and the subterranean passage to which it leads? Nay, thou *must* know it,' she added, with involuntary emotion, as she thought of the last time he had passed through it on the eventful night of his wedding. 'Well, there lies thy safety. Follow it carefully; and here is the key. Stay not, tarry not. Alice and I will pray for ye.'

She handed the key to her brother, who silently transferred it to the King.

'Thanks, dear Ruth.'

He crossed the room, pushed open the panel, and placing a light in the entrance, signed to the King to enter. Then turning to Ruth, he resumed:

'I will watch here with you, sister, until the enemy are in sight, and I know with whom I must contend. Should our hiding-place remain unsearched, then, when our pursuers shall have departed, we will return to crave a night's lodging at thy hands. Should the passage be discovered, we will endeavour to find safety in flight—one or both, as occasion serves us. Meanwhile you, my liege, must think only of concealment.'

'You will follow me, then?' said the King, as he turned to enter the passage.

'My liege, I will do as the moment's necessity shall bid me,' said Ernest respectfully but resolutely. 'If it be possible

to attend you on your flight, I will speedily rejoin you ; if it be impossible for me to do so, my liege, forget me and save yourself. Nay,' he added, as the King seemed about to interrupt him, 'grant me this much, I pray you. On bended knee I entreat you, by the love of your people and your country, by the true and loyal hearts that await you, the brave ones that have died for you, save yourself ; and if I am not with you, leave me to my fate ; and know that the brightest, the holiest wish of my life has been to die in the defence of my sovereign. My liege, refuse not the last request I may ever make to you.'

'For our country's sake, not for our own, we must obey thee, my faithful Ernest,' said the King, with emotion, after a long pause ; 'but we hope none the less that thy generous wish will be frustrated, and thou wilt live rather than die for the sake of Charles Stuart.'

Ernest with a sudden impulse seized the King's hand, and pressed it passionately to his lips ; then following him into the passage, he proceeded to lay before him in detail the plans which he had formed for his security, in the event of his personal assistance being impossible. When he had done this, and initiated the King into all the mysteries of the passage, he returned to Ruth, and calmly addressed her :

'If Charles be absent all may be well, at least so far as my gracious master is concerned. And mark me, sister, thou also hast thy part to play. Whatsoever happens, betray not thy guest. Let the hospitality of thy threshold be unsullied, even though loyalty itself may not move thee. And for me, pray forgive me as thou wilt, but for the rest do nothing. Speak not of me nor to me. Forget the relationship between us. Place no obstacle to my plans, though it were even to save me from death. Nay, do not interrupt me, for time presses. Thou canst not save me, if once either fall into the hands of the foe ; for I fly not without my King, and doth he fall, I will die beside him. My own sister, Heaven knoweth I grieve for thee ; but Heaven hath ordained all, and will watch above us.'

As he spoke the last words Alice reëntered the room, and Ruth turned hastily away, that these last few moments might

be spent together. Alice's face was pale, her step hurried. She had but just completed her change of dress, and some other necessary arrangements for her husband's safety, and was already on her way to join him, when her quick ear had been alarmed by the sudden tramp of horses approaching from the distance. Her face told the story which her trembling lips refused to utter; and Ernest, rapidly crossing the room, stood beside her, taking his last farewell more in the intensity of tone and glance than in any actual words of parting.

'My poor Elsie,' he murmured, 'I see what thou wouldst tell me; and yet be brave and listen, for I have but little time to counsel thee. Let not thy words nor thy looks, Alice, belie the garb thou hast assumed; but when they approach the secret panel, tap twice upon the wainscot, but not too loud; and if the passage be discovered, tap thrice again, but louder; and remember that the fate of England depends upon thee.'

At that instant the tramp of horses became audible even where they stood, and the mingling of rough voices as the troopers shouted angrily to their steeds or to each other.

It seemed as if the sounds brought to Alice a yet more intense realisation of the danger that hung over them. Her face grew more deadly pale, and she clung tremblingly to her husband as she exclaimed,

'O Ernest, Ernest, they will slay thee!'

For an instant Colonel Heyward paused. Something in the agony of those tones echoed in his own heart, and grew in intensity as he clasped his child-wife closer and yet closer to him; but when he spoke it was calmly:

'There is indeed danger, my poor child; but Heaven be- holds us, and will not let thy burden be greater than thou canst endure. To that Heaven I commend thee; for never will the orphan be forsaken, the helpless left desolate. Alice, my own wife, I go where duty summons me—to defend and, I will not deceive thee, perchance to die for my noble and honoured master. Look up and speak to me, dearest; let me once more hear thy voice; let me once more hear thee call me Ernest.'

'*Ernest!*' she echoed, in a tone painfully altered. Then as

Ernest, still holding her to him, drew nearer to the window, she held him back, and implored him to conceal himself. But he still lingered, and asked her if his brother led the troop.

'O no, thank Heaven! They are led by a stern hard-featured man, with a scar upon his brow. I have seen him before.'

'I know him,' said Ernest calmly; 'but he will not recognise me. Time has changed me since we met. I am a man now, and then I was a boy. My plan will be successful.'

Alice started, and glanced up to her husband's face. She could not read the expression that gleamed in those earnest eyes, so true, so ardent; mingling in their calm depths so intense an affection for herself with so complete a devotion to his cause, that the tears gushed suddenly into her own. Fearing to grieve him, she turned hastily to the window.

'They have reached the front door, Ernest. There is no time to spare. O Ernest, save yourself, my husband!'

'One moment.' He drew her closer to him, and again his few parting directions fell hurriedly on her ear; but so low that she only just caught the words. Presently she shrank back with a sudden cry, either of pain or fear.

'Alice, Alice,' he urged, 'if you love me!'

'I will, I will! But, O Ernest, my husband, can this indeed be needful?'

But he, with a fervent embrace and blessing, turned from her and rushed from the room.

Alice sank on her knees on the spot where he had left her, her face hidden in her hands, her whole frame quivering with the violence of her emotion. What was there in his parting words that had blanched her cheek to such ashy paleness? What was there in his last embrace that had filled her with a new-wakened terror, at the same time that it moved her to a yet deeper love? What was there in the vow she had just renewed, so holy yet so awful in its tendency, as to dim the brightness of her nature, and change her from a thoughtless child into a thoughtful and heroic woman?

The scene altogether had lasted but a few minutes. Alice

melted there perhaps but a moment more ; but when Ruth returned to the parlour she started and exclaimed, for it seemed to her that whole years of sorrow had passed in that brief interval over the beautiful face.

There was no time for words ; if there had been Alice could not have spoken them ; and the next moment the Roundhead leader entered the apartment.

He gazed rapidly round him—a tall, dark-featured, cruel-looking man : he marked only two young Puritan women in the staid neat attire that characterised their sect ; and if their faces were pale and anxious, their dark robes betokened recent grief ; and their fear was naturally accounted for by the nature and the suddenness of the intrusion. Ruth had looked up as the door opened, and rising from her seat, steadied her voice to demand the reason of his presence.

‘ If ye are in need of rest or shelter, both are at the disposal of the zealous supporters of our cause. If it is refreshment that ye stand in need of, there are ale and meat below, wherewith to refresh the outward man ; and there also ye may perchance find the godly George Gottenberg, who hath this day come to visit us, and who will doubtless be as ready to minister to the fatigued spirit as my servants to the tired body.’

‘ Thanks, maiden, we will partake of both in due time ; but our mission brooks no delay. We are in search of the man Charles Stuart, and other of the ungodly Philistines, who have this day been vanquished by the pious General Cromwell, whose troops are in the neighbourhood.’

‘ I marvel,’ said Ruth, growing paler and paler beneath the scrutiny of the Roundhead,—‘ I marvel that ye seek for Philistines in the house and in the family of a righteous man. Methinks that at gossip Sheely’s, or some other of the Royalists of this benighted village, likelier traces might be found.’

‘ Maiden, the viper is sometimes hidden in the turtle’s nest ; and all of this house are not so loyal as thyself. Speak, and tell me if two horsemen have approached this dwelling, which way they have departed, or if they are still here.’

‘ No horseman has approached our dwelling,’ said Ruth

calmly. 'Wayfarers, indeed, have been here in quest of alms, and are departed ; but I questioned neither whence nor whither.'

'Maiden,' resumed the Roundhead, 'thy statement perchance may be correct ; but nevertheless it is my painful duty to search this house. We are well aware of the wiles and machinations of the ungodly, and how soon they can throw a veil of mistaken kindness over the eyes of weak and deluded girls.'

He turned abruptly on his heel and left the room, slamming the door violently behind him. But scarcely had his steps died away in the corridor when the panel opened, and Ernest stood there. He laid his finger on his lips to enjoin silence, and in a low voice addressed Ruth :

'Are there soldiers outside as well as inside the house, Ruth?'

'There are a few,' she answered, gazing hurriedly from the window ; 'but they are in charge of the horses, and are stationed only near the front door. Still it were risky to leave thy hiding, Ernest, unless compelled to do so.'

'That is what I would say to thee. Ruth, I can trust thee, for I know that thou art true and faithful, and even where thou lovest not, wilt not betray. Therefore I tell thee, together with Alice,—lest *her* heart, though ever loyal, should fail her,—if *one* only escape the enemy, he will linger in the thicket that doth guard his exit ; and there must thou seek him, come weal, come woe, and afford him thine aid in all that he requirith, for *my* sake, and for the honour of thy house. Thou must give him also a trusty guide—thou knowest where *one* can be found—and let him not linger *here*, but proceed at once to our friends of Pickersleigh, who will give him leal greeting and safe shelter in his needs. Ruth, *thou* wilt promise me this,' he added, in a low hurried tone, as he marked the expression of his wife's face, 'for Alice hath already as much as she can bear.'

'I will promise thee all that thou canst desire,' cried Ruth, her voice broken with sobs ; but Alice, holding her husband's hand, stood as white and emotionless as a marble statue of despair. But, O Alice, where is thy faith—hath it perished ! Thy hope—hath it forsaken thee ?

Steps were again approaching, and Ernest withdrew into

the passage and closed the panel behind him. The click of the bolt could be heard in the breathless silence ; but Ruth trembled as she thought what an unavailing barrier it would be. The two girls had quitted their places to speak to him ; they had now no time to resume them ; but each sought hurriedly a seat, and catching up a book or piece of work, vainly endeavoured to assume an appearance of unconcern.

The quick eye of the Roundhead, however, had marked the change of position, and he turned hastily to Alice.

‘May it please you, young mistress, to permit me to look behind your chair’

Alice rose hastily, it seemed with indifference ; but her eye glanced round nervously as the Roundhead moved aside the heavy seat, drew back the thick curtains of the window, and finally proceeded to examine the wainscot and the panelling within a few yards of the hiding-place. Presently he moved further off, and Alice resumed her seat and her book ; but her quick eye watched each movement of the soldier. Ruth leant back in her chair, and prayed silently. Her own safety, and that of her brother, perhaps also that of Alice, was imperilled ; her hands trembled, and she laid down her work, that her emotion might not further awaken suspicion.

At last the soldiers seemed satisfied, and the girls’ hearts beat high with hope, when Obadiah, with another glance round the room, exclaimed : ‘There is yet one panel which we have not tried,’ and walked straight to the secret door.

At this critical moment the self-possession of the Royalist lady did not desert her. Bending slightly to one side, and concealing her hand as she did so, she tapped twice, gently but distinctly, on the wainscot. Faint as was the sound, it attracted the attention of the Roundhead ; and turning round he asked hastily,

‘What noise was that ?’

‘Did you hear one ?’ said Alice haughtily. ‘Nay then, perhaps ’twas a death-watch ; or, Ruth, was thy foot asleep ?’

But as she spoke the hand of Obadiah encountered the secret spring.

‘Ha !’ he exclaimed, ‘we have something here, I find !’

And Alice repeated the signal as the door was violently forced open, and the soldiers rushed into the secret passage.

A brief pause followed, and then a loud shout of triumph reached the watchful ear of the terrified women. Alice flung herself into her sister's arms.

'O Ruth, Ruth!' she shrieked, 'all is over; and *he—they* are lost! The enemy have triumphed.'

'Call no man thy enemy,' said Ruth, with forced calmness, and remembering even in that hour of sorrow the maxims of her childhood. 'Verily hath the hand of the righteous fallen heavily upon us; but we may not murmur an the will of Heaven be accomplished.'

'But, Ruth, Ruth, remember it is *thy* brother—it is my husband—who is taken!'

'Verily I know it, sister, and my heart is heavy; but I may not repine, even though the loved one be taken from us. Hush, they come!'

Alice buried her face in her hands; at the same instant the Roundheads returned, bringing with them a prisoner. The leader turned to Ruth.

'I little thought,' he said sternly, 'that so much deceit could lurk beneath so fair a face, or that the man Charles Stuart would be hidden in the house and by the children of the zealous Master Heyward.'

Ruth gave one hurried glance at the prisoner, but beholding in him not Charles Stuart, as she half expected from the words of Obadiah, but her loyal and devoted brother, turned away her face and burst into tears. Once indeed she would have spoken, for she owed no allegiance to the King, and her brother's liberty, if not his life, was at stake; but she caught his glance as it rested imploringly upon her, and his words returned hastily to her remembrance. Yes, he had spoken truth: no word or deed of hers could help him in this hour. And so, powerless to aid, she would not add to his sorrows; and, though trembling for him when Cromwell should discover the deception, she mastered her emotion with a powerful effort, and awaited in silent horror for the crisis which was to come.



And now Alice was to fulfil her task—her task which had been so generously yet so sorrowfully prepared for her. At the first mention of the King's name, forgetting all, she had looked up in an agony of terror. Where, then, was her husband? Already slain perchance, else had he been beside his King. One moment more, the calm noble face, the manly form were before her, and the truth was felt and understood. Charles had escaped; her husband had delivered himself up in his stead. Her duty was clear enough, painful enough too, now—to carry out the deception, to mystify his foes, and, by her own manner towards the captive, confirm their triumph, and thus hasten their departure.

With the King in their hands, they were scarcely likely to hunt for a less noble prey; and so long as the grounds were left unsearched the Stuart had no cause to fear. Another yearning, too, had taken possession of her at the sight of her captive husband. Could she, then, let him depart without either a word or a sign to show him at once the intensity of her love and of her grief? There was but one way to do so; and as he crossed the room, accompanied by his relentless guards, she rushed forward and flung herself at his feet. Lip and cheek grown pale with agony, her long dark tresses escaping from her cap and hanging dishevelled upon her shoulders, she seized his hand in hers, and kissing it frantically, exclaimed:

‘My gracious sovereign! Alas, alas, that I should see thee thus, and cannot aid thee! O my liege, my King, can nothing now avail thee?’

Her eyes in their yearning sorrow were lifted to his, and a glance of intense love and gratitude was her reward; but though Ernest's face was pale and calm, his lips compressed as in sudden pain, and for a moment there was silence. Then he bent, and slowly, lovingly, raised her from the ground ere he found words to reply. It was so hard to speak, in his adopted character, the cold and courtly phrases that befitted him, when his heart was almost breaking with its love and gratitude; and he longed to fold his young brave wife, if for an instant only, to his breast, and thank her in broken becoming words for

the heroism of which he so fully understood the pain ; but he might not, and only Alice could detect the slight trembling in his voice, or read other than mere natural feeling in the low-spoken words.

‘We cannot behold without emotion thy loyal feeling,’ he said at length. ‘We owe thee much also for thy faithful watching ; yet neither by word nor deed can we repay thee. But *it* is the means, not the heart, that is wanting to us. *Be faithful still* ; and e’en though success be wanting, the name of Mistress Heyward will be remembered with gratitude by the Stuarts and by all true adherents of their cause.’

So saying he led her to his sister, and pressing her hand to his lips, with the chivalric courtesy (it seemed) that befitted his race (but with far different meaning was it received by Alice), he waved an adieu to both, and passed from the apartment surrounded by the soldiers.

For a few moments Ruth and Alice stood motionless by the window, their eyes fixed alternately on the thicket where the King must be concealed, and on the group of men and horses standing patiently at the hall door. Presently the rest came forth, and mounting, rode slowly away, leaving the monarch safe indeed, but bearing amid them the bound and captive form of the devoted husband and brother. But when the last sound died away in the distance, Alice lost the fixed look upon her face, and with a shriek of such agony as would have made the stoutest heart quail before it, and which reaching Charles in the thicket showed him the cost of the courage which had saved him, sank senseless to the earth.

Long ere Alice had recovered from her death-like swoon, long ere Ruth had been able to persuade herself that there was really life in that rigid marble face before her, Ernest was confronting the vindictive anger of Cromwell ; and Charles Stuart, provided with a trusty guide, had already found safety and succour with the bold Savages of Pickersleigh, whence he started the next morning for the coast.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

‘Mark his spirit;  
See how he mounts above their cruel deeds,  
Confronting evil fortune.’ CUTTS.

WE must now return once more to Worcester. It was scarcely twelve hours since the battle, and a deep gloom enveloped the narrow streets, now crimsoned with blood and made horrible by slaughter. Of the whole Scottish army but a handful had escaped; the rest were slain in battle or taken prisoners, or had fallen victims to the hatred of the peasantry whilst endeavouring to escape northward. Cromwell, having ordered a general thanksgiving and a banquet at Whitehall, and having, moreover, caused nine of the principal prisoners to be tried by court-martial for high treason (a proceeding which had been abolished by the Parliament in the late King's reign), was preparing to return to London. He was sitting at his table, pondering gloomily over the events of the preceding day, and revolving in his mind fresh plans for the future, when the Puritan Obadiah, lifting the curtains of the tent, appeared somewhat unceremoniously before him. Impatient of disrespect, the General's glance and word alike fell harshly on the intruder; but he, heedless of displeasure, pushed forward, and his first hurried eager words brought a flush of mingled and triumphant feeling to his superior's face. Incredulity, amazement, then exultation, gleamed alike in his stern eyes and rang forth in his hasty tones; but the answers, short and hard as they were, had a sound of truth, and with a well-satisfied air the man left the tent to fulfil his further task; whilst the General, losing for a while his ordinary calmness, hurriedly paced his tent, his feelings finding vent in muttered exclamations and incoherent words. His leading thought was triumph, heartless and bitter; but others mingled also, until the curtain was again slowly raised, and captive as well as captors stood in silence before him. The General paused in his walk with a hasty taunt; his eye glanced coldly and sternly upon the group; a bitter smile wreathed

his lips for a moment, but for a moment only; and then his face changed, his voice grew husky, his words inarticulate with passion; for the prisoner was not—as he had been told—Charles Stuart.

‘Sirrah,’ he cried at last, while every feature in his face seemed distorted with rage, ‘did ye not say that ye had taken Charles Stuart? and do ye bring this man in his place?’

‘Nay,’ said Ernest, with a calmness proportionate to the agitation of the General; ‘you could scarcely expect to have the son in your power as well as the father.’

Cromwell turned his stern eye full upon the prisoner. He could not help admiring his undaunted bearing; but had he been younger and braver than he was, it would have made but little difference to him. Others younger than he had already perished on the scaffold.

‘Where is the King of Scots?’ he said.

‘Far beyond the reach of his father’s murderers—at least I hope and trust so,’ replied Ernest, with less prudence than might have been looked for in one so situated; but all the wrath and sorrow and indignation for the fate of his beloved master were rekindled in Ernest’s bosom at the sight of its perpetrator.

The shaft struck home, and a darker and yet gloomier frown was upon the General’s brow, and for a moment he was silent. Then he continued slowly,

‘If unaware of the present refuge of the Scottish King, you will not pretend to deny that he was with you at Edgeleigh.’

‘I neither deny nor acknowledge it,’ replied Ernest firmly. ‘His Majesty was at Worcester, and shared bravely in the fight. If he has not fallen into your emissaries’ hands he is, I trust, already in safety.’

‘And what right, may I ask you,’ said Cromwell sternly, ‘had you to take upon yourself the name and character of your sovereign?’

‘Nay,’ replied Ernest, ‘ask rather what right had the Huntingdonshire gentleman to deprive the nation of its King, and to lay his hand on the throne which he had made void?’

Cromwell’s lip quivered with passion.

'Your name?' he said at last.

'Colonel Heyward ; of Edgeleigh,' he added, after a pause.

'Heyward? Brother, I suppose, to the present owner of that mansion ?'

'The same.'

'And may I ask how you, the son, the brother of a loyal house, dare to aid and abet—'

'The rightful monarch of this realm,' said Ernest. 'Your question, sir, is already answered.'

'Do you know to whom you are speaking ?'

'I do,' replied Ernest. 'You are General Cromwell.'

'And knowing it, you yet speak thus ?'

'I do,' replied the Colonel calmly ; 'for I neither acknowledge myself guilty of crime, nor the right which, in such a case, you would have to be my judge.'

'You are my prisoner, Colonel Heyward.'

'As are many better men than myself. It is the fate of war, and I accept it.'

'And you are aware that by the laws at present in action you are amenable for an offence of which the punishment is death ?'

'Of that also I am aware,' replied the Colonel very quietly ; 'yet death so earned is a glory, not a punishment.'

'Under whom have you served ?'

'Under various leaders. First under his Majesty, and later under the Duke of Hamilton.'

'It is well. Where is General Middleton at present, and Lord Derby ?'

'I am not aware.'

'You are doubtless informed of his Majesty's intentions ?'

'If I were I should not betray them.'

'We may cause you to alter your decision.'

'Then you will do what no man has ever done before,' returned Ernest, with the calmest composure. It chafed General Cromwell beyond endurance.

'Which way,' he said, 'has the King proceeded—to London or to the North ?'

'The King will be in safety. You cannot harm him. And you may save yourself,' whispered an officer, on whom the youth and courage of the prisoner appeared to have made some impression.

Ernest bowed courteously in reply, but remained firm.

'I decline to answer any question whatsoever by which either my King or my friends may be even remotely endangered.'

'That is your ultimatum ?'

'Yes.'

'Then,' replied the General, 'you have sealed your fate. This time you shall not escape me.'

There was a brief pause, during which Ernest calmly awaited the decision of the General. He would not have been surprised to have been referred to a court-martial, scarcely so to have been led off at once to execution; but neither fate awaited him. A few of the officers, who had dropped in during the interview, approached and spoke eagerly to Cromwell. One of them was recognised by the Colonel as the father of Esther. But the recognition was apparently not mutual. Probably he had long since forgotten his obligations, and if not it seemed difficult for any one to assist him in so dire a strait. At last Cromwell turned round and addressed himself once more to Ernest.

'These gentlemen,' he said, 'have voted that your further examination be postponed. So be it. Guards, remove the prisoner to the fortress. We have appointed Sir John Grandison governor for the present. For you, Colonel Heyward, are you decided on silence? Remember that, once in those towers, submission will no longer avail you.'

'I am resolved,' replied Ernest.

Cromwell turned away. As he did so General Norreys leaned forward and whispered to the prisoner,

'I have not forgotten you, Colonel Heyward. Esther's debt may yet be paid.' And he drew back into the crowd.

Cromwell then commanded Captain James Grandison to accompany Colonel Heyward to the fortress, and to give him in charge to the Governor, his father.

Ernest glanced towards his destined conductor. He was still very young, perhaps about five-and-twenty, and though slight, tall and grave-looking for his age. He seemed too youthful and inexperienced for so important and painful a task. His manner too as he advanced was diffident, and his eye seemed to seek counsel from some one in the crowd. Another moment and Cromwell would have marked his hesitation, when Norreys laid his hand upon his shoulder, with a word of hasty injunction. James bowed his head, and turning abruptly to Ernest, courteously and in a voice of kind consideration requested him to follow. Ernest turned to do so. The guards drew closer around him, when at that moment Charles Heyward entered the room. The rumour of the King's capture had been rapidly noised abroad, and officers and men crowded to obtain a glimpse of the captive monarch. Major Heyward, whose friendship with Cromwell obtained him at will ingress to his tent, entered boldly and looked in through the half-open doorway. He marked the fierce dark soldiers, the noble form in the midst of them, and he too triumphed in his heart. When lo! a well-known name was spoken, and as the face, beautiful in its scorn, turned proudly upon the General, Charles started back with a cry of horror, for he had recognised his brother.

That same evening two persons were conversing together in a spacious and handsome house in one of the principal streets of the town. The younger and apparently more excited of the two was a young and delicate-looking girl. She might have counted some seventeen summers, but her tiny figure and shy retiring manner caused her to seem more childlike than her years, whilst she spoke and acted like a woman. Her father had laid his hand soothingly on the bright braids of hair that, escaping from her cap, fell down over her neck and shoulders; and a half-smile played upon his face, as in her grave soft tones she repeated again, but unawares, the words which four years before had fallen from her childish lips :

*'O, but he cannot be so bad, father ; he saved me.'*

'My poor child,' said the Roundhead gravely, 'innocent he may be of actual crime ; but he hath offended against the laws of the State, and according to those laws he must die.'

'But they are wicked laws, then,' said the girl firmly, 'if they condemn the innocent.'

'Hush, hush, daughter ; he hath fought against us ; he is a Royalist, and yet—I cannot bid thee be ungrateful.'

'He drew me from the depths of the lake,' she said sadly. 'The waters had closed over my head. You had lost me but for him ; and yet you will not even *try* to save him.'

'O child, child, these are cruel words ! Thinkest thou I have forgotten the vow I breathed in the first hour of gratitude ? Thinkest thou that I hold the debt lighter ? Ah, no, child — far heavier, far holier, even now than then.'

'But it is so sad to think of it ; to feel that he has none to plead for him—none, except the helpless child whom he risked his life to save.' And the deep rich colour on her cheek bore witness to her passionate emotion.

'Daughter,' said the Roundhead, with a calmness that he did not feel, 'other Royalists have suffered, and thou hast not wept their fate.'

'Because I knew not of it,' she replied, sending back the tears that welled fast into her eyes. 'I knew not of it, and they were strangers to me ; but he gave me back life and all its dear ones, and I would but render him the same.'

'Which thou canst not,' said her father sadly.

'No ; but you can do so,' she said proudly. 'You have influence and power. You are a friend to the man who is to judge him. You know the iron heart that can alone declare him free, and you will not speak.'

'I cannot ask my friend to act against his duty. Sir John Grandison will be a just judge. It is not for me to bid him lean to mercy. Nay, even thou, my Esther, who art so dear to him and who art about to become his child, could not so far move him.'

'Then there is no hope ! O father, think of his poor young wife, for they tell me he is already wedded ; think of his six



his father, his brother, whom you call your friend, before you tell me not to hope!

'There *is* hope,' said her father, 'but such a frail one that tremble to think how much depends upon it. I will wait until judgment is pronounced, and then, if *death* should be the penalty, I will plead for him.'

'Father, *dear* father, it will not be in vain!'

'I trust not, daughter. But here comes James Grandison. May thine eloquence gain him also to thy cause.'

He left the room, and Esther sank into a chair and gave vent to a flood of tears. She had a grateful and a gentle heart, and this was her first insight into the horrors of the times. Many of the scenes that were constantly passing around were carefully concealed from her, as her parents dreaded the nervous excitability of her temperament, and the fits of melancholy which the sight of suffering or sorrow invariably brought upon her. As it was she had read the tale of grief in the sad stern features of her father as he returned from Cromwell's tent, and her eager questions had elicited the truth. For the merest stranger she would have grieved, but the name of her gallant preserver had excited in her not only a poignant sorrow, but a firm resolution to save him; and powerless herself to aid, she threw herself at her father's feet, and besought him for his own sake, for her sake, for the sake of the life that had been so nearly lost, to do his utmost in the Royalist's behalf. From her father she had heard much, from her attendants more; and by degrees the whole story of his eventful life, his courage, the gallant and heroic action which had become the crisis of his fate, nay, even a whispering of the seer's prophecy, reached the young Puritan in her lonely chamber. And she wept over the sorrows of Alice, and well-nigh identified herself with the beautiful young Royalist, whose sad story now melted her to tears, now braced her with renewed determination.

It was in the former state that she was found by her betrothed, as with slow grave steps, very unsuited to a young man of his age, he paced the long passage and stood before her.

'*Esther! what has happened?*

She started as he entered ; then, brushing away her tears, stepped forward, and, taking his hand in her pretty demure way, said half confidently, half imploringly,

‘I want you to help me, James.’

‘To help you !’ he cried, amazed. ‘Speak, Esther ; you have only to command.’

‘It is not for myself that I would plead,’ she answered. Then, after a pause, ‘It is for another—one young indeed and beautiful, and perhaps even less fitted than myself to cope with suffering and sorrow ; one whom I have not seen, but whose trouble hath been told to me—the wife of the Royalist Colonel Heyward, whom I implore you to assist and save.’

An expression of intense surprise had succeeded the sadness upon the young soldier’s brow ; when Esther, reading perchance in his silence the hopelessness of her pleading, sank back upon the couch and sobbed more uncontrollably than ever.

‘Esther,’ he cried at last, ‘what would you have me do ?’

‘I would have you save Colonel Heyward.’

A longer silence ensued. James stood before her in an attitude of deep perplexity, and a look of pain stole over his expressive features as his glance rested again upon the tearful countenance of his betrothed. He seemed irresolute ; and the colour deepened upon her cheek, but faded as she saw his lips more tightly compressed and the cloud darkened upon his brow, and she turned abruptly from him and buried her face in the cushions of the couch. A few minutes elapsed, painful to both of them ; and then James Grandison approached his betrothed, and drawing the unresisting hand in his own, said gently and firmly,

‘Esther, it is impossible. Colonel Heyward is in prison and about to stand his trial ; and know that his life or death depend on the verdict of the court, not on my father’s judgment, nor on mine.’

‘Is it true,’ she said, ‘that it was *you* who conducted him to prison ?’

‘I did,’ replied the young soldier sadly ; ‘and, Esther, it *was far from* willingly. I grieve for his youth and admire his *courage* ; and even were it not for the interest with which you

father evidently regarded him, and in which you have been taught to share, it was a hard, I may say a painful task, to conduct a brave man to prison and to fetters.'

'And if painful, why do it?'

'To save him from the insults to which he had perhaps been exposed had that duty devolved upon another; and because, Esther,' he added gravely, 'it was my duty to obey.'

'And you *will* not save him?'

'I *cannot*, Esther.'

'Then I ask, I command you to *try* to do so,' she replied firmly, and with an assumption of tearful dignity. 'I ask you as your betrothed bride, and you cannot refuse it me.'

'If you would but ask for possibilities, dear Esther,' he said mournfully, 'I would never rest till I had laid them at your feet; but you ask for a life that is made forfeit. Colonel Heyward has drawn upon himself the wrath as well as the justice of Cromwell; first by saving his sovereign, and again by the imprudent bitterness of his words.'

'My father is not so hopeless,' said Esther, in the half-pleading tones of a weary child.

'Your father—does *he* say so? No, dearest, I will not so deceive you.'

'Then go,' said Esther, bursting into tears and speaking with uncontrollable excitement,—'go, James, and hear unmoved the sentence which will be pronounced against him; be with him to the last, and then go, if you can,' she added, with a shudder, 'and tell that poor young widow that the betrothed of one who owes her husband *life*, has left him without a struggle to his fate.'

'Esther, these are wild words. What mean you?'

'I mean that when all other help had failed me, he, a stranger and a Royalist, yet perilled his life to save the daughter of his foe.'

'Colonel Heyward! Is it possible! Esther, what would you have me do?'

'I *would* have you not despair of saving him.'

'I *will* try not, Esther. But my father—'

'Must judge for himself, young man,' said Norreys, who at that moment reëntered the room. 'The trial will take place at once, I presume?'

'I believe so.'

'Then after it is over I will speak with him.'

'And you will *try*?' said Esther eagerly. She was a variable being—a very creature of smiles and tears—and hope now reigned for the moment in her heart. 'You *will* save him?'

'Farewell, Esther,' said her betrothed in a low hopeless tone; 'farewell. And rest assured that if occasion offer I shall not hesitate to befriend the preserver of my betrothed.'

'Do nothing imprudent, James; it would be worse than useless,' said Norreys gravely. And Esther gave a quick half-frightened glance, which her betrothed returned with a smile.

'There is no danger for *me*, Esther. If there were, I should not fear it.'

'I should fear it for you,' she said wearily.

Then he left the room.

'Father,' she added, 'he thinks our cause is hopeless.'

'And I,' replied Norreys, 'believe that there is just a hope.'

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## CHAPTER XXIX.

'And never king or conqueror's brow  
Wore higher look than his did now.' L. E. L.

It was not until some days after the battle of Worcester that Charles Heyward succeeded in obtaining permission to visit his brother. It was yet early in the morning when, after a sad and sleepless night, he directed his steps to the stern old fortress where Colonel Heyward was confined. The visit was likely to be a mournful one, for his knowledge of Cromwell's character told him that Ernest's fate was sealed; yet not for worlds would he have missed the interview. He had yearned after the companion of his boyhood, the brother he had so loved. He *had admired* his firm uncompromising character and intrepid

courage, not only in the exploits of his earlier youth, but in the cause he had chosen. He felt too, in his innermost heart, that Ernest was dying in defence of a good and lawful cause; and a pang shot through his heart as he felt that Ernest, captive and condemned, would scorn to change his lot with his. For one only could be right; which was it? Many things had shaken the confidence of Charles; but his proud heart knew not how to submit, even whilst he would no longer blame his brother. The small still voice was whispering in that hour, and refused to be stifled. 'What are you?' said the voice; and Pride answered, 'I am a major in Cromwell's army, the honoured friend of a victorious general. My name is great among the godly; I am feared by the Malignant and the Philistine.' 'Speak plainer.' 'A rebel against the house of Stuart, the partisan of an usurper, the friend of regicides.' Such were the thoughts that crowded through the Roundhead's mind, as he passed through the still silent streets. It was not the first time he had heard that voice; it was not the last time he would refuse to listen to it. Like many another, he had felt too plainly that his party had gone too far, but he would not retreat. He had been shocked at the report of the King's capture, and had dreaded a renewal of the horrors of '49. Had that been so, he would have renounced his cause, gone over to the Royalists, and fought until there was no longer a Stuart to uphold. But the rumour had proved false, and his newly-awakened loyalty had calmed again. The sight of his brother had given rise to other feelings—feelings of ardent love and intense sorrow, rendered more bitter by the knowledge that he was powerless to assist him. His thoughts wandered back to earlier days. He saw in fancy his gentle Royalist mother teaching the history of her country to the child Ernest, whilst he, her self-willed elder boy, preferred to roam through the valleys and hills in solitary independence. He saw, still later, that mother on her deathbed, and recalled her dying prayers that her boys would be leal and true subjects to their King, and remembered how, in after years, one son, and he the youngest, had alone proved faithful to her teaching. He recalled the first coming of his cousin Alice, and the influence

she had had upon the character of Ernest, and then the well-remembered day which sent the favourite son an exile from his father's dwelling, and forced their lives farther and farther apart, until this hour had brought them again together—the one a soldier in a cause his heart approved no longer, the other a prisoner about to expiate with death the crime of having served his King.

The fortress was reached, and the heart of the Roundhead sank within him as he ascended the steps and knocked loudly at the massive door. A few moments passed. The door opened slowly, grating heavily on its hinges, and a soldier appeared, saluting Major Heyward with military precision and inquiring his commands.

‘I wish to see Colonel Heyward.’

‘I have orders to refuse admittance to the prisoner, without a special order from the Governor.’

‘Not to an officer of Cromwell's staff, I suppose?’ said Charles haughtily, producing an order from the General himself. ‘Let me pass.’

The sight of Cromwell's signature decided the matter, and the soldier signed to Major Heyward to follow him. Then, taking his lantern, he led the way across the court, and entered the fortress. Charles tried in vain to repress his emotion as he traversed the long dark passages, and not a word passed on either side until they reached their destination. Then Charles pressed eagerly forward; his breath came thick and short, his heart beat wildly. The heavy bolts were drawn, the key turned with a dull grating sound in the rusty lock, the door creaked on its hinges, and he entered the cell alone.

Though the sun had risen an hour or two, the cell was dark and gloomy, and it was some seconds before Charles could distinguish with any certainty the surrounding objects. He was in a long, low, narrow room, with rough stone walls and a tiny-paned window, letting in the small amount of light and air that humanity intended to be transmitted to the captive, whilst the flags with which the cell was paved were broken and uneven, with a thin covering of straw. On the low couch, the sole fur-

niture of which the prison boasted, lay Ernest Heyward, his anxious thoughts for a while faded in a deep sleep. His eyes were closed; his hair tossed back from his brow; his hands, which were heavily fettered, were clasped together; and the placid smile which played upon his lips and lit up his pale features showed that his mind at least was wandering free and unfettered in the fair realms of dreamland. Through the barred window above mentioned a sunbeam came stealing, and as its ray fell brightly on the noble countenance of the prisoner it seemed to the agitated mind of his brother like the pale halo of glory round the brow of a martyr.

But Ernest slept on. His thoughts were with the loved ones of his youth, and his mother seemed standing before him. He saw her in the mildness of her matron beauty, and her sweet words of praise and affection seemed murmuring in his ear. He felt that she was separated from him, but it seemed to him that the barrier was about to break, and that he would soon be folded in her arms—he knew not, he cared not how. He dreamt of pride and glory—prophetic visions of his sovereign's triumph; of his fair and gentle Alice; and here his brow contracted and the smile faded from his lips, for she was not beside him, and a nameless dread filled his heart. But again the smile beamed forth, brighter even than before, growing indeed into an almost unearthly brightness, as other dreams passed before him. And he thought of Ruth too, and his soldier friends, and of the brother who, unknown to him, was watching there, longing to clasp him to his heart, yet not daring to disperse that peaceful veil of sleep that was spread between him and his sorrows.

For a few moments Major Heyward stood there beside the couch. He bent sadly over his brother, and caught the sound—or at least it seemed so—of his mother's name. With a heavy sigh he turned away, and thought how her heart would have mourned even whilst she gloried over her brave boy's early fate.

'And well might she mourn,' he muttered; 'snatched from his home and friends to die a death like this at the early age

of two-and-twenty. And yet she might have gloried also for his heroism, his devotion to the cause she loved.'

Thought travels fast, and in far less time than has been taken to describe it the clash of the heavy chain and the drawing of the bolts gave evidence of the gaoler's departure; and, startled by the sound, Ernest sprang to his feet, and was clasped immediately in his brother's arms.

For the first moment neither spoke, but each gazed earnestly upon the other's face. Ernest was paler than of wont; care and hardship and suffering had left their traces upon him. The deep dark eye wore a shade of sadness; but it was a passing one, and it changed to a look of such earnest hopefulness, such bright enthusiasm, that Charles beheld him with surprise.

Ernest was the first to speak, and his brother almost shuddered as the tones so much loved, so well remembered, fell now upon his ear in the silence of a prison.

'My dear Charles—my dear brother! I had not looked for this. I had feared to descend into the grave without once again beholding thee; but Heaven hath decreed otherwise, and from my heart I give thanks that we have met. And yet, my brother, what a meeting! After so long and cruel a separation, we meet on the very borders of another world, to take a last embrace, to bid a last farewell, till sorrow gives place to joy, time to eternity.'

'Descend into the grave.' Yes, Charles felt that it might be so. It was not a time for mercy. Cromwell had shown them that, not once, but often; and even the name of Fairfax was not without its stain. The memory of Lisle and Lucas had not yet died out of the land, though not as yet traced in indelible characters on the marble pavement of Colchester Church. The fate of Sir Francis Spottiswood had shown them that youth was no excuse in the eyes of the present rulers; the fate of Montrose, of Hamilton, and of Capel had proved to the world that neither affection nor influence had power to save; and thus Charles felt, and with bitter anguish, that it was his cause, his friend, that would condemn his brother.

'Ernest,' he cried, after a few words had passed between



them, and pride and bitterness and affection struggled together in his heart, 'forgive me, for it is my cause that brought thee to this.'

'Forgive?' replied Ernest, as though he scarcely understood. 'I have already forgiven the men who will bring me to my doom; but thou—thou, my brother, for what must I forgive thee? Nay, thou hast judged me harshly, I doubt not,' he said, with a smile, as his brother interposed a word of grief and bitterness at the memory of the past; 'but it were strange indeed hadst thou done otherwise. And for thine anger, hath it caused me pain, how much more gladness hath thine affection brought me. Nor was thine anger even without some foundation. Yes, my brother,' he added, and his voice, before agitated, seemed suddenly imbued with a deep unearthly calm, 'I see now how much there was to excuse in thee, and on my part how much to be pardoned. When the last hour of life is at hand, then do the faults and follies of our lives rise up before us, and we see not as before we saw. I have been careless and unheeding, and have angered where I might have softened, and I knew it not till now; but now I do know it, and I would ask thee rather to forgive me, that in my last hour I may be at peace with all.'

Charles listened in silence, and a great tide of grief swept over him, till he turned away his head, as though unworthy to meet the strange deep tenderness of his brother's glance. Yet not as his brother only did he then admire, then honour him; it was rather as the youthful hero, the fettered captive, the martyr to a noble cause. It was the heroic fulfilment of duty that he honoured; and honoured, moreover, in one whose fragility of person and delicate beauty he had been wont to scorn, but whom henceforward he would judge more truly, for that slight form enshrined a mighty soul, and the glad-hearted boy was a martyr and a patriot.

'My brother, canst thou speak of thy approaching fate, and yet speak calmly? Even now I will hope, for thy cause is good; and Heaven will protect thee.'

'My cause is indeed good,' exclaimed Ernest; 'although,' he added, with a sad smile, 'I had not thought to hear it from

thy lips. But believe me, were it not for thy sake, my beloved wife, and the few friends that are left me, and that the King can ill afford the loss of even *one* loyal heart, I should rejoice, not grieve, to die. I have risked my life on the battle-field, and shall I mourn to lose it *now*, when the life of my sovereign has been granted me in exchange ?

Charles sighed deeply.

‘I cannot understand thee :’ he said presently ; ‘but how and in what manner didst thou then save thy King ?’

‘I thought thou hadst known it, or I had been silent,’ answered Ernest ; ‘but I will tell thee, lest some day Alice would learn it of thee.’ He drew his brother to the couch where he had been lying, and seated himself beside him. Then he resumed : ‘I was with my Sovereign in the battle ; and when the troops gave way around us, and Wogan and Lord Cleveland covered the King’s retreat, I still kept close beside him. Our horses were strong and fleet, and soon bore us not only from our pursuers, but from the straggling adherents of our own party, and Leslie’s scattered troops. As we passed through Fairleigh, however, we came on a small party of Levellers, who had dismounted at the inn. Too late to turn, we dashed past them, and were already some distance in advance before our foes had recovered from their surprise. For some little time we rode for our lives, but our horses’ speed was flagging. Our pursuers gained upon us, when a sudden turn favoured us ; and the road at the same time branching into two, we attempted to baffle them ; and instead of riding direct to the next town, sought shelter at the hands of my sister. What follows recalls such agonising emotions that I will pass hastily over it. After a brief interview with my cherished wife, my dear sister, we entered the secret passage ; the King, at my request, proceeding to the farther extremity, whence he was to make his escape at my signal, without waiting for me to join him. My first intention had been to follow him immediately, but later *circumstances* decided me otherwise. There was no means of *fastening* the door from the outside ; and I felt convinced that *should* the soldiers once find themselves within the passage, they

would force their way through, unless their end should be already, in appearance, attained. There might also be difficulty in escaping unseen through the grounds while the soldiers were still in the neighbourhood. I therefore judged it better that his Majesty should conceal himself at once in the thick brushwood that hid the entrance, instead of attempting farther flight. Alice and Ruth were instructed in case of the worst to provide for his ultimate security. And blame not Ruth, my brother ; for, staunch and faithful as thou art to thine adopted cause, thou wouldst have done the same rather than that a second regicide should have been perpetrated. Yes, I thought so,' he added, as he caught his brother's smothered assent. 'But now let me continue ; for thy visit must be brief, and I have many things to say to thee. I remained myself at the secret panel until the warning was given by Alice that it was discovered. Hastily extinguishing my light (the signal for the King to escape), I rushed down the passage, but not before the hasty opening and closing of the outer door had assured me that my warning had been taken. The next instant came the crash of the panelling and the rush of the soldiers into the passage. The darkness and the sudden turnings baffled them for a moment, and my knowledge of the place was an immense gain. I might still have saved myself, perchance ; and for an instant the thought that I could do so sent a thrill of hopefulness to my heart ; the thought of the friends I was leaving, of my noble Alice, and the agony of grief and sorrow my fate must bring upon her, the fear that her heroism would desert her, and my sacrifice be a useless one, passed vividly before me, but faded away, and in one second more my final resolve was taken. Soon enough I had reason to rejoice at it. The King's cloak had fallen on the ground, and the soldiers, stumbling upon it in the darkness, uttered a shout of triumph at this conclusive proof of the presence of their prey. Had I too fled, we must then both undoubtedly have been taken. As it was, finding me there alone, they would doubtless conclude that my companion had taken the other road. While I congratulated myself on my scheme one of the men struck a light, and I was at once discovered. It mat-

tered little ; one moment, sooner or later, this must have been my fate. I had resolved to sell my life dearly, to lose it rather on their swords' point than on the scaffold, to which I doubted not my capture would conduct me ; but it was to be otherwise ; and I left my father's house, bound indeed as a captive, but living, and indeed unhurt. This was how it happened : I had placed myself at the end of the passage, with my back against the door, which in the brief moment that was left me I had locked, at the same time securing the key. Of the struggle that followed I can tell you little. Once—it was when the clashing of our swords was loudest—the handle of the door was turned suddenly ; from the outside I knew, but the soldiers, if they heard aught, deemed but that I had touched it in the struggle. The door was fastened well and securely, but the King knew not this ; and hearing the sound of the strife, his soul doubtless revolted against thus leaving me to my fate, even though on my knees I had prayed him to do so. Fearing lest he should repeat the effort, to his own destruction, I threw down my arms and surrendered at discretion, and in his name. “ Would you become a second time the slayers of your King ? ” I said ; and then fierce words passed to and fro among them, and some would fain have slain me where I stood ; more were for the glory of capture ; but, as I had hoped and trusted, none sought farther for their prey. And then they laid hands upon me and bound me, and led me back through the dim dark passage into the very presence of my wife and Ruth. What passed further I cannot now speak of. Some day, when I am gone from you—some day, when the wound is healed, the sorrow passed away—Ruth may tell it thee.’

Charles had remained speechless with emotion and interest and surprise ; but he now grasped his brother's hand, and pressed it convulsively to his heart.

‘ My gallant Ernest,’ he said, ‘ truly thou hast done nobly in the cause thou hast chosen. And O, woe is me, the guerdon is denied thee. Yet this much at least may comfort thee : thy sacrifice hath not been in vain—the Stuart is in safety.’

‘ For that thank Heaven ! But so much I had gathered

from the stern treatment of my gaolers, from their gloomy countenances, nay, from their very silence when I questioned them. Had it been otherwise, the tidings would have reached me all the sooner, that they would gloat over the suffering they caused. Nay, I should not have said that, Charles ; and Heaven knows that in my heart I forgive them truly.'

There was a brief pause, and then Ernest again spoke.

'Charles, knowest thou how it fareth with my other friends?'

The answer was sad and reluctant.

'But badly, Ernest. Leslie, Middleton, and Massey are prisoners. They have been sent to the Tower. Lord Derby has been taken near Chester, tried by court-martial, and executed. Hamilton was also condemned, but died of the wound received a few hours previously in the battle.'

'This is indeed melancholy news,' said Ernest ; 'but we may meet the sooner.'

Charles could not answer, and it was again Ernest who broke the silence.

'And Alice, my brave Alice, must bear up for my sake ; and when I am gone thou shalt tell her this—that I mourned but for her ; that I died blessing and thanking her for her devotion to my cause, and I felt more deeply than I could express the devoted unselfish love which led her to carry out, so bravely, my last and dearest wishes.'

'I will tell her all, my brother,' cried Charles passionately. 'I will be true to her and to you until the last moment of my life.'

Ernest thanked him warmly, gratefully, and then resumed :

'Seek Lord Hertford for me, if indeed he be alive and free, and tell him that to the last his name was remembered with gratitude and affection by the soldier he has so long befriended ; that neither in prison nor on the scaffold was he forgotten. Bid Edward Leighton comfort my gentle Alice ; and if, as may one day be, he chooses as a bride our sister Ruth' (Charles started, but refrained from comment), 'tell him that I have wished and have hoped for it, and that in this hour my blessing was upon them.' And then other messages were sent, and other promises received, and so the time passed on.

'We have little time left, Charles,' said Ernest presently; 'thy visit hath been longer than I had dared to hope; it is now drawing to a close, and I too must shortly be summoned hence. Bid me farewell, my brother; for to-morrow perhaps—'

He had no need to finish. Charles understood him but too well, and a thrill of horror passed through him as he replied,

'So soon! O no, it cannot be so soon; tell me that I have heard thee wrong.'

'It is true, Charles. Thou knowest the judges before whom I must to-day appear, and the part I have taken in the war. In a few short hours my fate will be announced to me, and once spoken the end cannot be far distant.'

'But the sentence is not passed. There is yet hope.'

'There is no hope, my brother,' said Ernest impressively; 'and why should I shrink or waver? There is glory in such a death, and I do not fear it.'

'You are so young to die, so very young,' said Charles hoarsely.

'Yes, I am young in years, Charles; and yet I have in some ways lived years where others have counted only months or weeks, and this is a fitting ending. A few short hours and I must die! I feel it, know it; for my mother has been with me in my dreams, and my destiny has been foretold to me.'

'Our mother!' cried Charles, amazed.

'Yes,' replied the Royalist; 'I have had a strange dream. At home, my brother, in the dear scenes that I have left for ever, I should have held it a warning; to-day I regard it as a prophecy; for my mother bent above me and wept over me and blessed me, and I strove to clasp her in my arms, but she smiled and whispered, "In a short time—not yet!" O Charles, such a glory was round her pale face, and the sound of her voice was so solemn and so sweet that I longed to be with her, and at rest. But, hark! The gaoler approaches. We must part. Farewell, my brother! My poor, poor Alice!'

A look of pain crossed his features; and as Charles pressed him convulsively to his heart, he said,

'I could have wished to give her also a last embrace.'

'I will bring her. I can—I will !

'They will not allow you,' answered Ernest, looking up, however, with a bright expression of hope upon his face.

'They *shall* allow it ! I will see the Governor myself. If his heart is not of steel, he will grant me this one request.'

Then the gaoler entered, and, after speaking a few words in an undertone to the prisoner, looked at Charles, who understood him, and prepared to go.

'Farewell, my brother,' said Ernest. 'I go before the judge, to hear my sentence ; but the hope thou hast placed before me will at least brighten the remaining moments of my life ; and if my Alice cannot now behold me, we shall some day meet in heaven. In a short time—not yet !'

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## CHAPTER XXX.

'Thou'rt brave and faithful ; so my heart still deems thee,  
Though, by hard fate, compell'd to be thy foe.'

JOHANNA BAILLIE.

WILL you follow me, kind reader, to the judgment-hall ? It is a dark, gloomy, spacious chamber, in the centre of the fortress ; and it bears a record of many crimes, and many errors, and judgments, right and wrong, passed on the old and young, the rich and poor, the innocent and the guilty. It is crowded now to its full extent ; for the case is one of unusual interest. There are fierce Roundhead soldiers, with hearts as hard as are their iron skull-caps ; there are stern grave men, who come not through interest but through duty, to judge and, it may be, to condemn ; there are idle spectators, and open foes, and secret partisans perchance ; and all alike gaze eagerly, in anger or in astonishment or in admiration, upon the brave young hero who has cast away his life for the sake of Charles Stuart. His person is already familiar to many of them ; his name is renowned among them from the prowess of many a battle-field. It is not as a stranger that he stands there ; and yet, if there are some to pity, there

are more to blame, and few indeed to appreciate, as he deserves, either the loyalty or the enthusiasm that has to-day arraigned him at the bar of their so-called justice. The judge had already weighed and pondered upon his case; the verdict 'guilty' had already been pronounced, when, in the momentary silence that ensued, Charles Heyward entered the hall, his pained glance gathering in a moment the whole bearings of the scene, resting at last in troubled anxious yearning upon his brother's face. The upper end of the hall was occupied by the Governor and his suite and a few of the higher officers of the Roundhead army; the jury were not far removed, and right in front of them stood Ernest Heyward. His brow was calm, his voice and manner dauntless as ever; his face had not paled, his courage had remained unshaken during the whole of that long trial; he had listened with a smile to the arraignment against him, with a dignity as unchanging, a spirit as unbending, as that of his royal but ill-fated master not two years before. A fervent follower in the footsteps of Montrose, he had proved himself not unworthy of such a friend. Undaunted still, he had listened to the verdict, and heard unmoved the muttered satisfaction of the fierce Puritans around him. Perhaps he was even glad, for the moment, that the painful suspense was over, the harassing cross-examination concluded, the result definitely decided; that he had no longer to fence and combat the questions and insinuations of his enemies, from whose malice the least slip or admission might be wrested, not to his destruction alone, but to that of his friends. Now the strain was over, and he had only to submit to what would follow. He was not kept waiting. The Governor turned towards him; and then, for the first time, Ernest started visibly; for the words reached his ear with an intonation that suddenly seemed overpoweringly familiar to him. Perhaps he had been too much absorbed in the intricacies of his defence to have noticed this before; perhaps the words previously spoken had been drowned to him by the stir and confusion that prevailed in the court; or perhaps it was only the painfulness of their allotted task that had awakened in them the strange earnestness that thrilled through his heart like an echo of other



years. He raised his eyes and glanced searchingly on the officer before him. There was nothing in the grave compassionate face that continued the train of associations into which he had fallen; but somehow, as he gazed, an inexplicable feeling of respect came over him, and he felt drawn strangely towards him—towards him who was the arbiter of his fate. He marked the glance of pity and regret, he felt the reluctance with which the harsh sentence would be passed upon him, and he knew that the heart of the *man* was triumphing over the sternness of the *judge*; that the Roundhead soldier could feel sympathy even for his foe; and that Sir John Grandison yearned compassionately towards his captive. And meanwhile the grave kind tones fell earnestly upon the silence, asking what he could prefer wherefore judgment should not be pronounced against him.

Then Colonel Heyward stepped forward, and the silence deepened throughout the court. Had he been a stranger even—as we have said, he was not—his gallant conduct, his extreme youth, his noble but pensive countenance, would have excited interest; while the gracefulness of his person, the richness of his Royalist attire distinguished him advantageously from the stalwart and gloomy Puritans among whom he stood. The cause that brought him there made that interest deeper, even while it softened not the hearts of his accusers. Charles had drawn out of sight, lest his brother's glance might fall upon him, and one or both be unnerved. It was not necessary. Ernest's gaze, calm and steady, was directed only towards the men who had condemned him, and who confronted him yet stern and pitiless, with but one exception—Sir John Grandison. Pity and interest are in every feature of *his* speaking face; for, rigid and uncompromising as he is, and will be, in the fulfilment of his duty, his heart yearns with a strange unwonted yearning to the unfortunate young man whose sentence he is about to pronounce. He leans forward, as though he would not lose a word, an accent, of those which now fall so firmly from Ernest's lips, winning, by their expressive earnestness, the sympathy for which his heart is too proud to ask. He listens to

each word, he marks the flashing eye, the flush of enthusiasm that deepens upon the prisoner's cheek, but he catches no appeal to the sympathies of his hearers, no extenuation of what *they* call his crime, no wavering in his ardent loyalty. Ernest scorns to sue for mercy ; and *pardon*—what hath Cromwell to forgive ? Justice, not mercy, he would look for at their hands ; and they will mete it to him according to their usurping code, as they meted it out to Charles Stuart, and later to Hamilton and Montrose.

‘Gentlemen,’ said Ernest proudly, ‘as a Royalist and Catholic I owe no allegiance to your laws or to your opinions. I am no traitor, for I have followed the banner of my rightful sovereign, King Charles ; and to him I am still faithful. Had I revolted against him, had I fought against the crown, had I given to the Parliament the duty I owed to the Throne, had I chosen another in the place of him whom Heaven has appointed to rule this realm, or joined with heart or voice in the regicide of ’49,—then indeed might this sentence have been pronounced against me, for I should have been a traitor to my King. Had I risen against King Charles, had I placed myself beside a rebel and an usurper, as the so-called defender of the nation’s rights, the supporter of an unjust cause—a cause which violates the laws alike of God and man,—then indeed, if fully, knowingly, I had gone astray, I should have merited condemnation ; and even, if men’s voices were silent, would Heaven and my own conscience have condemned me ! But I have not done so. I have fought in the cause of my King, as your ancestors and mine have done before me. And the cause that was sacred then is sacred now, is ever sacred—the power delegated to man by God. Yea, though the usurper may break the sceptre and hurl the crown into the dust, the hand that held the sceptre, the head that wore the crown, are still the same ; and the person of the King, though an exile or a captive, is still sacred. It is not easy to restore the sceptre ; it is not easy to raise the crown, when those who would degrade it are powerful and strong ; but it is easy and it is glorious to a loyal heart to follow the fortunes of his exiled prince, and conquer or die.’

his cause. And, gentlemen, that cause shall still triumph, though not as yet. When errors have been expiated by suffering; when the usurper shall have proved himself a tyrant; when England, groaning under her oppression, shall sigh for her rightful sovereign,—then will our cause triumph, and then will King Charles the Second ascend the throne of his ancestors. You ask me wherefore the judgment should not be passed upon me. Because, as I have said before, I am no traitor. I am your prisoner, but I owe no allegiance to your laws; but neither do I ask for mercy at your hands. I am ready to seal my loyalty with my blood and by my death. I am young, but that does not make me less devoted to my cause, or less opposed to yours. I am but *one* amongst many; but my arm is as strong, my loyalty as firm, as those whom you have condemned before me. I ask justice, and justice only. It is not for a Royalist soldier to blench from the penalty of having served his King. I fear not death; but I will die as I have lived, a Catholic and a Royalist—a true subject of his Majesty King Charles, whose true and lawful sway I have upheld: and believing this, and acting upon this belief, in the presence of Heaven and of my own conscience, I am *no traitor!*

The last echoes of his voice faded away, and there was again silence—deeper, more intense, more awful than before—falling like a chill upon each heart, for they knew what it preceded. The face of the Governor was a shade paler; there was a kind of agitation in his voice, almost unknown in one so stern and dignified; and twice he strove to speak, and twice he rose from his seat, and prepared to read the awful sentence of death, too often listened to in those warlike times.

Once, but it was once only, for an instant he thought of proposing conditions to the man before him; one last chance of life to one so young and heroic. But one glance at the calm earnest brow, the erect though fragile form, the grave unmoved expression—the echoes of his last words ringing upon the air—and he knew that *his* loyalty at least would be unshaken to the last.

*The sentence of death was spoken; but not a shade had*

passed over the countenance of Ernest, far less agitated, far less moved than the judge who had pronounced his doom. A confused murmur of voices had taken the place of the unbroken silence; murmurs of pity, of triumph, of party spirit; but one amid their number seemed struck dumb with horror, and his face blanched with anguish was turned towards the prisoner. It was Charles Heyward. Not being able to obtain an interview with the Governor, Sir John being already in the court, Major Heyward had, as we have seen, followed him thither, and, himself half-concealed behind his comrades, had lent his undivided attention to his brother. He lost no word that fell from his lips, no glance of his eye, no lofty expression of enthusiasm that passed over his speaking face. During the reading of the sentence he had still watched him, and read in his half-sad half-scornful smile, in his whole attitude and bearing, the unshaken courage of his heart. But when the Governor ceased to speak, the agitation, the emotion, that Ernest scorned to show appeared but too plainly on the features of his brother. He waited until the prisoner was led away, calm, fearless, intrepid as before, and then forcing his way through the dispersing crowd, and sending his name and credentials to the Governor, requested an immediate interview; and then traversing mutely the gloomy corridors, nor paused nor loitered until he gained the reception-room, and overpowered by emotion and sorrow sank into a chair and buried his face in his hands.

For some minutes he remained thus. They seemed ages to him. Twice he started to his feet, resolved to go at once for Alice, and trust to the humanity of the Governor to admit her. But a brief reflection decided him, and he silently resumed his seat, and giving himself up to the bitterness of the hour heard not the approaching footsteps nor the opening door, until a hand was laid on his arm and a voice close at his side said courteously, 'I fear that you have been waiting some time, Major Heyward.'

Charles started violently, but, recovering himself, rose from *his seat* and gazed earnestly at the Governor; in the court he *had scarcely* noticed him.

He was a strong powerfully-built man, of about fifty, his hair slightly sprinkled with gray, and a look of indescribable pity in his eyes, called forth most probably by the haggard look and evident agitation of his visitor.

'Sir John Grandison?' asked Charles at last.

'At your service, Major Heyward. I was told that you would speak with me.'

'I wish, Sir John,' answered Charles, his voice quivering with emotion, 'to speak to you on behalf of my brother, the Royalist Colonel Heyward.'

A look of deep pain crossed the Governor's features.

'I fear,' he said, 'it is beyond my power to assist you.'

'I ask not his life, sir,' said Charles huskily, and stretching out his hand as though to detain him. 'Alas, it were vain to ask *that* of you. There is but *one* who could avert his fate, and his voice is silent, his heart is of iron; and so he, my brother, young, noble, brave, must *die*,—and die,' he added, his voice choking with emotion, 'because conscience was more precious to him than—'

'Hush, hush!' answered Sir John kindly, for his heart felt deeply for them both. 'You forget to whom you speak, and to another than myself your words would, I think, belie the garb you wear. But what, then, can I do for you?'

'You can let him see his wife. Nay, it is but a small boon, and it is in your power to grant. O, in mercy refuse me not,' he added, unable to define the expression of the Governor's face. 'She is so young, so devoted. Do not deny her this last sad request.'

'I will not—I cannot,' thought Sir John; but aloud he said, 'She is young, thou sayest. Thinkest thou she can bear to see him thus?'

'Better than to let him die uncomforted—better than to live without the memory of his farewell. She is young indeed, but she is strong of heart. She is but a child in years, but old in all that can adorn a woman, ardent and devoted. Her heart will break *if she does not see him*.'

'*Then she shall see him*,' said Sir John kindly. 'Nay,

thank me not ; it is but little I have done for you, and even this may bring me into disgrace. But I too have known sorrow, and the recital of your woes hath touched a tender chord. Alas, I too had a sister, young, frail, and beautiful as yours can be. I had loved her as the only treasure of my heart, but it pleased Heaven to take her from me. She married an ultra-Royalist, Sir Edward Leighton, and went over to his cause—to his faith. We parted in sorrow, not in anger ; but when again I sought my home, both were gone—Alice and Edward. This is why I look kindly on a Royalist who, like your ill-fated brother, is true to his adopted cause. See,’ he continued, pointing to a portrait that hung above the chimneypiece, ‘that is all that remains to me of *Alice Leighton*.’

Charles had tried to speak, but in vain, during Sir John’s speech, but he now cast his eyes upon the picture. Ah, one glance was sufficient. He knew well the sweet and gracious woman whom he had known in childhood. He knew well the lovely face that was remirrored in his fair young sister ; and, staggering to a seat, he remained silent, faint and giddy with surprise and agitation.

The Governor stepped hastily forward, as if to support him. ‘Forgive me,’ he said, as his guest sank into a chair, ‘that I have detained you with the mention of my private sorrows, knowing as I did how far, far greater were your own. Believe me, I had not done so, did not your mention of your fair young sister recall my beloved Alice so vividly to my mind as to banish for the moment all graver considerations.’

The apology fell on unheeding ears, but the name of Alice startled Charles again into consciousness. Rising from his seat, and grasping the hand of the Governor, he exclaimed, in a voice broken with mingled feelings,

‘Sir John, your niece, Alice Leighton, is the wife of my brother.’

‘The wife of your *brother* ? O heavens ! can this be possible ?’

The words came with a groan from Sir John’s trembling lips ; and then, with a quick searching gaze, his eyes met Charles’s, and

though he would read his very soul, and dare him to prove that he had said. But there was only truth, sad, mournful, not indisputable in the face before him; and, as the brief explanation followed, he sat down to the table like a man in a dream, and, while his hand shook and his frame quivered with suppressed feeling, wrote a few lines and gave them to Charles.

'This will insure your admittance,' he said in a strange unnatural tone of voice. 'Till then, farewell!'

He went with him to the door, wrung his hand in silence, and returned hastily to the privacy of his own apartment, there to reflect on the strange sorrow-fraught tidings, and to gather strength and firmness for the fulfilment of his duties.

'Strange!' he cried at last, as he raised his bowed head, and looked once again upon his sister's portrait. 'Strange and most cruel coincidence! For, alas, to aid him is beyond my power. O Heaven, thy ways are unsearchable, but ever just! Had I not parted in anger, this trouble perhaps had never been. And now to see him *die*, my kinsman, my nephew, the husband of my sister's orphan! To see him in prison, and not release him; on the scaffold, and not save him! He, towards whom, when a stranger, a captive, he was brought before me, my heart yearned with respect and admiration. And he is in *my* hands, his fate rests with me. My voice has pronounced his doom, my hand has sealed his fate! And I—I am his kinsman! I should have protected—saved him, and yet I am his gaoler and his judge! O, would that anything had been save this. My poor little sister! It is well, she has gone from us. How would she have borne that he should die, and that I should have condemned him? And thou too, my poor child, my unknown but already well-loved niece, how wilt thou regard the executioner of thy husband? O Alice, my poor little one, my heart aches for thee! Yet even thy load of sorrow will not be as mine. The love I bore thy mother has descended in this hour to thee, and I have condemned thy husband! The happiness of her child is dearer to me than my own, and I shall have blighted it for ever!'

*So spoke Sir John Grandison; so spoke the stern uncon-*

promising soldier, the inflexible judge, the man whom none had ever seen to flinch from the performance of his duty ; nor would he flinch even now. His heart was torn indeed, but his *will* was firm ; he would remain faithful to his post, though the fulfilment of his task and the joy of his life should come to an end together. But the struggle that ensued was severe. The storm passed. The victory was gained, and cold, stern, and passionless, Sir John left his chamber and proceeded to his wife's apartments. He had not before sought her, for he dreaded her woman's weakness and its effect upon his unsettled mind but now the die was cast, he craved, and not vainly, her counsel and her consolation.

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#### CHAPTER XXXI.

'She is not fair, yet pleases well  
'The eye in which no others dwell.'

COVENTRY PATMORE.

IN a quiet little parlour in a low ivy-covered cottage at Fairleigh a sedate-looking little Puritan woman was sitting, rocking a cradle to and fro with her foot, and chanting in a slow monotonous voice one of the psalms of which her party were so fond. She was much older, much graver, much less interesting than our fair Puritan acquaintance, Ruth Heyward. Her dress was of a yet plainer material and more formal style, and her face was of a severer cast than Ruth's. Cicely Gottenberg had counted more than forty summers, but her placid countenance would long defy the ravages of time, and she had few cares to leave their traces on her features. She was devoted to her husband's cause, but her heart was of a softer and gentler mould than his. After the private midnight marriage of Alice and Ernest, the indignant Roundhead had, as we have seen, departed in anger from the mansion of his patron, denouncing it in the bitterest terms as a refuge of Malignants, and prophesying the evils that would eventually fall upon it. Yet as time passed his feelings grew more softened, not only towards Master



Heyward, but also to the noble-minded Ernest and the frail beautiful Alice, whose winning manner and kindly heart, though he had so bitterly inveighed against them in the hour of his wrath, had in softer moments been more truly estimated. He had often since paid a visit to Edgeleigh, and had only left it a few minutes before the memorable events recorded in a previous chapter—we mean the capture of Ernest Heyward and the escape of King Charles.

Some days had passed away since then, but Gottenberg lived secluded, and news in those days travelled but slowly. He had often spoken to his wife of the family at Edgeleigh, and she knew and loved the gentle Mistress Ruth. Of Alice she had seen less, and yet the woman's heart of Cicely Gottenberg yearned towards the beautiful but desolate bride, and shed tears of sympathy over her sorrows. True she was of different rank and opposite cause, different in person and in fate, different too in creed and in character; but there was *one* link between them—rich and poor, high and low, sorrowing and peaceful, were, and must be, linked together in at least one bond of sympathy—the sympathy of one true woman with another.

And now Cicely Gottenberg sat by the calm fireside, and turned the busy wheel and rocked the cradle at her side, and chanted her accustomed psalm, and thought her accustomed thoughts until the door opened, and her husband entered.

The lines in his face were deeper, his form more bent, his hair whiter, and his gait more tottering than when we first saw him; but his eye was stern and cold as ever, and gleamed from beneath his silver lash with the same firm untiring zeal. He looked neither to the right nor the left, but drew his chair to the hearth, took down the huge family Bible from its accustomed shelf, turned over the well-fingered pages, and prepared and selected the texts for the morrow's discourse, and all the while the soft voice of his wife chanted the psalm and her busy hands continued her spinning.

'Cease thy song for awhile, Cicely,' said the Roundhead at length, 'and raise up thy heart in thanksgiving, for by a signal victory hath Heaven rewarded the Righteous.'

Cicely Gottenberg was a quick-witted but not a curious woman. She had seen from the moment of her husband's entrance that some great event had occurred, but the idea of asking a question or intruding herself upon his meditations had never for a moment entered her thoughts. She was perfectly aware that he would of his own accord open his mind to her, so inclined, and she therefore awaited his pleasure with her usual patient indifference, and, when he spoke, answered without expressing either surprise or gratification.

'Then there has been a great battle, my husband? Verily I give thanks to God for the glory of our cause, albeit my heart sigheth for the sufferings of the vanquished.'

'Thou shouldst not show pity for the Malignants, Cicely; rather shouldst thou rejoice in their defeat.'

'I give thanks for the good that it hath pleased the Lord to bestow upon us, my husband; but a good heart rejoiceth not in the misfortunes of another.'

'Thou art over soft, Cicely, woman,' answered George Gottenberg. 'Yet methinks thou hast right; and indeed, though we have much to be thankful for, we have much also to deplore. Much hath been granted to us, but much also hath been withheld.'

'Let us thank Heaven for its mercies,' said Cicely. 'But I gather from thy words that the Stuart hath escaped.'

'Indeed it is scarcely known, Cicely. Many and various are the reports of the battle, and it is not well to lend a believing ear to all that is told unto us; but many of the Royalist leaders have been taken, or have yielded themselves into the hands of the Righteous.'

'Heaven protect them!' cried Cicely. 'These are evil days! Heaven protect the innocent and misguided ones! and O, may the brother of Ruth Heyward pass scathless through the danger.'

'He is no more worthy of pity than many another,' answered George Gottenberg sullenly. 'Yet have I a kind feeling for the children of my patron, and I hope he is in safety.'

'Thou hast not heard aught of him, hast thou?' asked Cicely

nervously. 'Methinks thou art graver even than is thy wont, and Mistress Ruth's eyes were full of tears when I saw her not long since.'

'Thou knowest, Cicely, she hath lost her father; but, in truth, of Ernest Heyward I know nothing, save that he was in the battle. But this I do know, Cicely, that the armies of the Righteous have overspread the plain, and there are few among the Philistines who were not slain or captured.'

'It is Mistress Alice that I pity,' answered the matron; 'for I have never yet even seen this celebrated Cavalier.'

'He is handsome enough and young enough, ay, and good enough too for such a cause,' grumbled George Gottenberg; 'though he was ever a wild boy, preferring the sports and follies of youth to the counsels and conversation of his father and myself; and Mistress Alice, thou pitiest, Cicely? In truth she hath a fair face and a comely mien, but she hath a deceitful smile and an alluring voice which have beguiled the young and noble into the paths of error.'

'Let us pity rather than blame,' murmured his wife. 'She is but a child in mind and in years, and followeth but the maxims of her father, and— Was that a knock, good friend?'

'Twas but the wind, Cicely—but no, it is repeated,' he added; and, rising from his seat, he opened the door, and admitted the stern hard-featured Puritan, Obadiah.

Cicely started to her feet in alarm; for the harsh vindictive character of the intruder rendered him an object of terror and distrust to all. She half repressed a shudder, as she marked the expression of his face and the frown of disappointed zeal and bitter hatred that contorted his features. He shook the raindrops from his cloak as he entered, laid his pistols on the table, and kicking aside the chairs and stools that lay in his way, approached the fire and stood there without speaking to either Master Gottenberg or his wife, or indeed testifying the slightest regard for their presence. For some time the minister watched the demeanour of his strange visitor in solemn silence, and then asked somewhat hastily,

'Well, zealous friend, how fares it with the Philistines?'

Hath the man Charles Stuart escaped the snares that have been set for him? General Cromwell was in command they say; how then hath success been wanting?

'Yea,' answered Obadiah, 'the Stuart hath indeed departed unhurt; but—' here he paused, and Cicely snatched her child from the cradle and left the room ere he resumed; 'but I have other news for thee—Colonel Heyward is taken. I *said* it would be the worse for him if I met him.'

'Ernest Heyward is in the hands of the Righteous,' repeated George Gottenberg, while a look of painful interest passed over and softened for the moment his hard features. 'And when was he taken, I pray thee? And where is the boy?'

'In the fort at Worcester, which he is not like to leave, at least on *this* side the grave,' answered the Roundhead, with a hoarse laugh; 'and he was taken at the house of his brother, Major Heyward. Verily, he bore himself bravely and fought at first like a lion at bay, though methought he surrendered over soon. Perhaps his conscience pricked him at my sight, even though I recognised him not.'

'Not recognise thy master's brother?' cried the minister. 'Why, man, where were thine eyes? Who didst thou take him to be?'

'We were in search of a yet nobler prey,' returned the soldier, 'even the man Charles Stuart. But I thought I should have known Master Ernest, even in the cloak and in the character of his sovereign.'

'And if thou hadst known him, zealous friend?' said the minister.

'I should e'en have done the same,' answered Obadiah.

'Thou wouldst have arrested the brother of thy master!—the boy thou hast held on thy knee, whose home hath sheltered thee, and whose board hath nourished thee? O, shame, shame upon thee!' cried Cicely, returning.

'What, Mistress Cicely, forsooth!' cried the Roundhead angrily; and, turning with a look of contemptuous scorn, 'Hath thy wife turned Royalist, pious and truly zealous friend?'

'Mistress Gottenberg is no Royalist,' answered the matron.

She is a true friend to the right cause, but her heart scorneth be ungrateful and—'

'What needest thou, Cicely,' said her husband, 'that thou intrudest on the privacy of our interview?'

'I need little, husband,' she replied, 'save my spinning-wheel and distaff; for the visit waxeth long, and mine are not hands to remain idle—so, an thou wilt—'

'Nay, nay, Mistress Gottenberg,' answered Obadiah, 'we will not long detain thee from thy commendable employment. In thou wilt give us five minutes grace, I will clear the room of my presence, and leave thy husband and thyself to the sweet intercourse of conjugal felicity.'

'Yes, go, Cicely,' said Gottenberg, 'and thine ear for a moment. Return not as yet to thy spinning, but speed thee to the lanor, and see, if thou canst, Mistress Ruth, for I fear me a great trouble hath fallen upon her.'

Cicely obeyed and left him, and a few minutes after might be seen, wrapped up in a thick dark mantle, directing her steps through wind and rain in the direction of Edgeleigh. But to turn to George Gottenberg and his guest.

'Thy dame hath a ready tongue, zealous friend,' said the soldier, as the door closed upon Cicely.

'She has a good heart, notwithstanding,' answered the minister. 'But where did you say Colonel Heyward was confined?'

'In the fort at Worcester; and at day-dawn he is to die. Would that all Royalists were as easily disposed of! But thou—thou dost not look pleased. What ails thee, man? Well, an thou art dumb, I had best go; and, truth to tell, I have already loitered longer than were needful on my way. I came but to gladden thy patriotic heart with the welcome tidings of the victory. But, verily, thou lookest grave! Thou art of softer mould than I dreamt thee.'

He took up his pistols as he spoke and extended his hand to the minister, who took it reluctantly and answered,

'*Thou knowest I am a man of peace, and my mission is not at all among the warlike. Verily, I like not the accounts of*

battle and of slaughter, though I pray for the triumph of our cause and the downfall of our enemies.'

'Well, farewell, then, zealous and lion-hearted friend,' said Obadiah ironically; and then, without waiting a reply, he stepped out into the darkness, grumbling to himself at the state of the weather as he slowly pursued his way.

George Gottenberg resumed his seat, and, stirring up the fire and placing his Bible on the table by his side, began to muse on the tidings he had heard.

'Taken at last,' he muttered. 'Must his young life be quenched and his bright promise perish beneath the hand of the executioner? Is this the fate of the glad and brave-hearted boy who, but for his mother and his betrothed, might still be the honour and the pride of Edgeleigh. Well for his poor father that he did not live to see this day; the shock would have surely killed him. Ah, well, he was a kind patron to me, though somewhat wavering at the last.' Then a brand fell from the fire, and the noise, slight as it was, changed the current of his meditations. 'What am I thinking of?' he cried, as zeal became for an instant uppermost in his mind. 'What is the fate of a Royalist to me—to George Gottenberg—to the zealous upholder of a godly cause? And yet,' he added sadly, 'I have known him from his childhood—ay, and loved him too, till I saw him turn aside from the path in which I would have guided him, and heard him vow fidelity till death to a cause which I abhorred. *Unto death!* Verily, and he hath kept his vow, and borne himself bravely to the last. Ah, well; though his cause were an erring one, I will yet say that he was true of heart, and went blindly, not knowingly, astray. And I will say for him too that he was the bravest Cavalier that followed the banner of the second Charles Stuart.' Here zeal peeped forth again, and he added, 'Yet wherefore should I pity him? Is his fate harder than many another's? Why should they fall, and he, as erring, be saved? Has he not disregarded the counsels of his elders, and disgraced the name of Heyward for ever? Has he not brought sorrow and desolation to the home of his fathers?

If the branch be decayed, cut it off and save the tree. Let him reap the fruit of his wrong-doing.'

So mused and thought George Gottenberg till the night was far spent. Reverence for his departed patron, zeal for his cause, his natural sternness of character, and an undefinable pity for, and yearning towards, Ernest, the bright boy who in years past had been the very sunshine of the Manor-house,—mingled together, and gave rise in turn to all the varied emotions of grief, pity, triumph, and condemnation, as each in turn presented itself before him. And so the preacher mused on, looking back sadly, harshly, or complacently into the shrouded memories of the past, and looking forward with the same mingled feelings into the still mystic visions of the future.

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## CHAPTER XXXII.

'What is your will with me?'

JOHANNA BAILLIE.

It was already late in the evening, and Master Clifford, the venerable priest of Fairleigh, had returned home after a few hours' absence, and having partaken of a hasty and frugal meal, had just settled himself to his Breviary, when he was roused by a loud hasty knock at the door. During the last few years, England being distracted by the horrors of civil war, and the thoughts and minds of her children being otherwise directed, the persecution against the Catholics had been suspended, and priests and people were permitted to pursue their respective duties comparatively unmolested. Indeed, in the parish of Fairleigh, not only had the good old priest been tolerated by the Puritan inhabitants, but had also acquired their love and respect in no small degree; and some of the less bigoted amongst them had even been known to seek his advice in their affairs, or to send for him in sickness or distress. It was therefore with no surprise that Master Clifford rose from his seat and prepared to open the door. It could scarcely be any of his flock that required his assistance, for they were few in number,

and he had that same morning made his rounds. It was perchance, then, a Puritan, and the good father's heart yearned already towards the sufferer; then sighed, as he heard the moaning of the tempest and the rain beating against the window, and felt that the case must be an urgent one for the messenger to be sent out in such weather. He opened the door hastily, and invited the stranger to enter. He was evidently a Roundhead, and seemingly a soldier, but the ample cloak which he wore prevented any close investigation.

'Can you inform me if this is the house of Master Clifford?'

'It is,' replied the priest courteously. 'I am Master Clifford. What is your business, friend?'

The Roundhead looked into the calm truthful eyes of the old man, and was satisfied. He drew a letter from his pocket and handed it to him.

The priest looked at it with a perplexed expression; then breaking the seal and glancing over its contents, he said,

'You come from the fort at Worcester—from the Governor?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Very well; I will return with you.'

He stepped into the room, and hastily taking up his hat, and throwing a kind of mantle over his shoulders, was about to follow his guide. The letter, which he had thrown down, caught his eye, and snatching it up, he again slowly perused it. It was as follows:

'The Rev. Master Clifford is requested to proceed at once to the fort at Worcester, to attend a Catholic Royalist now under sentence of death.'

'Given this seventeenth day of September.

'JOHN GRANDISON, *Governor.*'

The letter throughout was written hurriedly, as though under the influence of great agitation, and the words, 'under sentence of death,' were so faint as to have been overlooked by the priest on the first perusal. Not so, however, on the second; and he sighed deeply as he folded the letter and followed the soldier



from the house. For some time they walked rapidly without exchanging so much as a word with each other. Master Clifford was perplexed and anxious; a vague presentiment of evil was on his heart. Why was the Governor so silent as to the name and quality of the prisoner? and why had his mind been so agitated, or his haste so excessive, that his missive was scarcely legible? Why had he sent out, at such an hour and in such weather, and on such an errand? It was not the wont of Roundheads—nay, of Royalists either—to be thus particular. On the contrary, it was only on rare occasions and with great difficulty that, even in his secular character, Master Clifford had been able to effect an entrance at all into the fort. He turned suddenly to his guide.

‘Do you know for what purpose I am sent for?’

‘Not exactly, sir; to see one of the prisoners, I believe.’

‘You do not know the name?’

‘No, sir, I do not. I live outside the fortress, and know little of what passes within its walls.’

They walked on again in silence: Master Clifford, because his heart was raised in prayer; the other, either because he was occupied with his own thoughts, or because—with an intuitive delicacy that can be sometimes found even beneath the roughest exterior—he would not risk an intrusion on his companion’s meditations.

And so they walked on side by side, the lantern they carried, the lightning that flashed through the heavens, alone lighting them on their way. The rain poured in torrents, and the slim shadowy forms of stunted trees and dark hedgerows peered ghostlike on either hand, until at length the gloomy walls of the town rose before them. Had it been daylight they would have seen that on every side was ruin and devastation, tokens of the victory. Whole streets had been damaged, houses plundered, pavement torn up, windows shattered, gateways broken down. But night threw a kindly veil over all, and Master Clifford saw little of either the mournfulness or the ruin as the fortress gates were opened; and, after a brief parley, he followed his new conductor to the Cavalier’s cell.

They were again silent ; for this time the manner and appearance of his guide were not such as to invite conversation, though the priest wondered, and was fain to ask for whom his services had been required ; but some instinct held him silent. Not a suspicion, not a most distant fancy crossed his mind as to the real name and condition of the prisoner. He knew that Ernest had been taken, and his prayers had indeed since been daily and hourly offered up for him ; but he could not believe that he would be condemned. He knew not either that he was imprisoned here ; he fancied that, like so many others, he would have been committed to the Tower ; whilst his youth, he augured, would save him from a more direful fate than captivity or exile. How soon, alas, was he to be undeceived ! The door slowly opened, the gaoler as slowly withdrew ; and then, without notice, without warning, before the priest's eye grew accustomed to the dimness, a long-loved form knelt humbly at his feet, a well-known voice echoed strangely through the gloom, asked and obtained his blessing.

A strange pang shot in that moment through the heart of the priest, a fountain of passionate feeling sprung up suddenly in his inmost soul, a keen awakening of human sorrow, that his long years of supernatural toiling had well-nigh caused him to forget ; but the piety, the abnegation, the self-restraining of those years were not in vain, and his calm mild countenance scarcely underwent a change. He raised the captive from the ground and pressed him to his heart ; then, in the dim light, he bent his head, and looked fixedly into the calm eyes which were uplifted to his glance. The gaze was very earnest, very searching, but the answer was satisfactory, and the low words, 'Thank God for you, my son !' were the first that in that hour of sorrow passed the lips of the priest. Yes, he had much to be thankful for ; he who had guided that young heart from infancy, who had loved him through the waywardness of his youth. That the heroism of his ardent nature had sealed his fate ; that the young life, fraught with such brilliant promise, was fast drawing to a close ; that his precepts, eagerly listened to and carefully followed, had brought him on through trial and sorrow to a

glorious but untimely fate,—all this he knew ; and yet, as he marked the calm resignation, the fervid faith, upon those youthful features, he could raise his heart to heaven in gratitude that the boy he had so long and anxiously watched over was about to leave him for a better land, bearing the standard of a hero and a patriot.

Drawing Master Clifford to a seat, Ernest placed himself beside him.

‘ You received my message, father ? ’

‘ I received no message, my son ; nor did I know, until I saw you, for whom my services were needed. See, here is the letter. ’

His voice slightly faltered as he spoke, but Ernest retained his calmness. He took the letter and glanced over it.

‘ Poor man ! ’ he exclaimed, with a sigh. ‘ I suppose he could not trust himself to write the name. I had no idea he could have felt so deeply, stern and cold and passionless as he seemed to be. ’

‘ Do you know him then, my son ? ’ said Master Clifford, with some surprise. ‘ And why should he feel your fate so deeply ? Or is he, perchance, your brother’s friend ? ’

‘ He is more than friend—he is of kin to me, ’ said Ernest. ‘ Do you not remember Lady Leighton, father, and how she used to mourn over her brother’s loss ; that brother—that long-loved idolised brother—is the Governor of this fort. ’

Master Clifford started. ‘ Grandison ? Yes, that was Lady Leighton’s maiden name. Poor man, poor man !— ’ then, as though some sudden thought had struck him, he added, ‘ Was it he, who— ’

‘ Yes, ’ replied Ernest. ‘ That was the worst—to feel that his nephew was a prisoner in his hands, and he might not release him, was bad enough ; but to have sat in judgment against him, and with his own voice sealed his fate, and with his own hand signed his death-warrant— ’ He paused abruptly, and then exclaimed, ‘ I never saw a man more broken down. ’

‘ Then you have seen your uncle, Colonel Heyward ? ’

‘ Call me Ernest, father. You were ever wont to do so, and

why should you change now? My uncle? Yes, I have seen him—in the court and in the prison. I felt drawn towards him, from the first, even when I felt him the arbiter of my fate; when his voice pronounced my sentence, there was something so noble in his appearance, and his tone, though firm, so full of kindness and sympathy, that my heart yearned towards him, though I knew him not.'

'But you saw him again—how, and where was it?'

'It was here. He came to ask forgiveness from his nephew, and from my heart I pitied him. He seemed quite changed since I had seen him but a few hours previous. His voice trembled, and his agitation was so great that I lost all sense of my own position in consoling him.'

'And how did he leave you, my son?'

'Much calmer, much more comforted, than when he entered, my father; he saw that I feared not—nay, that I gloried in my fate.'

'And do you not indeed fear death, mine Ernest?' asked Master Clifford tenderly, whilst a look of admiring love passed over his face.

'Father, I know not fear,' said the young Cavalier. 'I die as I have lived, in a good cause; and,' added he, whilst a look of unearthly peace illumined his pale features, 'and, trusting in God's infinite mercy to the last, without a fear and without a struggle, I will go forth to die.'

'And you regret not life?'

'Father,' replied Ernest, 'long years ago I knelt at your feet, and listened to the maxims which you were wont to instil into my mind; counsels of virtue and loyalty and honour, which have never been forgotten. The words which were my motto then are my motto still. You remember them. Yes, I see you do; but I will repeat them again to nerve my heart for the approaching trial; not death, but something bitterer than death. *Fais ce que dois admiennne que pourra.* Those were the words. You remember how I chose them? How my mother's gentle voice proposed them to me, and how her pale cheek flushed with joy when I promised they should be mine till

death! Ay, and I shall have fulfilled my promise; and can I regret that I have done so?"

'No, there is indeed no cause to do so, noble, truly noble youth. Thy mother may well look down on thee and bless thee,' thought the priest, as he gazed, deeply moved, in the flashing eyes and manly features of the young Royalist, and thought how soon he would be taken from him. Then aloud he said:

'Yet it has been sudden, Ernest; but a few days since and you were free. 'Tis a short time only since you saved your King, even a few brief hours since hope might have cheered and strengthened you.'

'No, father, it is not sudden,' returned Ernest quietly. 'For long years I have foreseen my fate; and when I surrendered myself at Edgeleigh, I knew that I had sealed my doom. Yes, even then it was as certain to me as when I stood in the judgment-hall and heard the sentence pronounced against me.'

'And when—' Master Clifford stopped, his voice faltering with emotion.

'I know what you would say, father,' replied Ernest. 'At sunrise to-morrow; and at midnight, so Charles has promised, my wife will come to me. Nay, grieve not, my father; rather help me with composure to await my doom, and prepare for the awful moment whose end shall be eternity!'

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### CHAPTER XXXIII.

'And in thy love I'll live, and in thy love I'll die.'

*Irene.*

For some time after the priest had left him—to return, however, before the last—Colonel Heyward was calmly occupied with his devotions. But when the day dawned and the time drew near for the arrival of his beloved Alice, his anxious heart was filled with sad forebodings, and he paced restlessly to and fro, ever and anon stopping to listen, but hearing naught save the

moaning of the wind or the pouring of the rain against the grated window.

‘It is a wild night,’ he said musingly, ‘and thou art exposed to its fury, my beloved. O Alice, my beautiful one, thou hast chosen a bitter lot in uniting thy fate to mine. Even now thou mayst be in danger, and I am not near thee! Alas, poor child, it would have killed thee to have let me die without a last embrace; and thou must live for Charles’s sake, to lead him to the rightful cause and to the one true faith. The Scottish seer indeed spoke rightly; and, thanks to her, I have long prepared for this. She spoke of hope too. Hope in another world has lent its brightness to me, but earth—What a dreadful night!’ he exclaimed again, as the thunder came with a terrific crash, and the lightning flashed and quivered through the cell, and vanishing left it darker and gloomier than before. At this moment, in the hush that followed, Ernest caught the sound of his brother’s voice, and a heavy knock at the gate. The sound fell clear and distinct on the night air, and echoed back into the lonely cell and into the brave heart that awaited it. He did not see how the gate was opened by the Governor in person, how he clasped the hand of Charles, and kissed the pale brow of his trembling niece. He heard not the words of love and sympathy with which Lady Grandison received her, but the time seemed long before the door of his cell was unbarred to admit Charles and Alice.

Yes, it was Alice, that fair fragile being, who leant upon his brother’s arm; and, with a low cry of thanksgiving, Ernest rushed forward and caught her in his arms. He passionately embraced her, and looked upon her fair sweet face as one looks upon a treasure that is about to be for ever lost. The veil fell from her head, and her long tresses lay in dishevelled masses upon his shoulders, but she did not speak.

‘Mine own brave Alice!’ said Ernest tenderly; and a tear, one of those tears which the bravest and noblest heart may shed in the hour of its agony, fell clear and bright upon those silken tresses. ‘Look up, beloved one; remember that we part but for a while; remember that the longest life is but as a dream

that passes swiftly away, and once past, we meet never again to part. Nay, weep not thus, poor child ; rather rejoice—rejoice that thy knight has been victorious ; that for him the strife is over, and the brightness of heaven is about to shine upon him. Thou wilt live for his sake, sweet Alice ; thou wilt bid another take his place beneath thy Sovereign's banner ; thou wilt lead thy brother to thy cause and to thy faith. And then,' he added, his beautiful features kindling with enthusiasm, his dark eyes gleaming as though with prophetic fire, 'thou shalt see the Stuart upon his throne, and peace and happiness in the land, and the gladdest union among the people. Then shalt thou joy in the part that thou hast played, and then shalt thou glory in the sacrifice ; for sorrow shall be lost in the triumph of thy cause, and the knowledge that its foresight hath made this hour glorious to me.'

Thus spoke Ernest ; and Alice, as she listened to his impassioned words, looked up amid her tears with a gleam of returning heroism. Charles had retired, and the two young Royalists—warrior and lady, wife and husband—were alone together. Long they stood there ; his arm encircling her slight shrinking form, his eyes gazing with yearning tenderness on her pale tearful features ; while her head was pillowed on his breast, her heart was treasuring the words that passed his lips, and aching with how intense an agony to know how soon she must listen for them in vain.

Kind reader, we will leave them thus ; leave them until the hour draws nigh for them to part ; leave them to bear alone the anguish of that parting, nor dare to intrude upon their sorrow.

One alone may enter, and he an old man with hoary head and aged features—it is Master Clifford. Yes, enter, sainted priest ; enter into that scene of woe, into that abode of sorrow. Bring comfort to the mournful. Enter, and with words of love and trust dispel the anguish of that hour ; enter, and with all the consolations of religion prepare the spirit for the realms of bliss.

The last sad hour had drawn to a close; the bell, sad warning of the coming tragedy, tolled forth heavily and slowly its muffled tones, striking terror and awakening pity in the hearts of many, and penetrating into that prison-cell. The sound of heavy steps was heard in the hitherto silent passages, and as the chains rattled and the bars fell to the ground with a heavy crash. Charles once more entered.

‘Only one moment, mind you, Major Heyward,’ said the gruff voice of the gaoler. ‘If you’ve anything to say, why, you’d better be quick with it. They’ll be here in a minute, and they’ll be not pleased to have to wait. If the Guv’nor hadn’t turned soft, you’d not have been let in at all,’ he muttered, as he closed the door after the Roundhead soldier.

At another moment such a speech would have been met by Charles with anger, or at least indignation; but now he had only one thought, one feeling, one grieving for his brother’s fate. He would fain have rushed forward and clasped him in his arms, but his very sorrow withheld him. All the memory of that bright youth, of that noble manhood—all the ties of affection and of kinship that bound them together—rushed to his heart, and deprived him for the time of all power, save of listening to his tones, and beholding him as he stood there.

The sound of footsteps came near, and Ernest, still unconscious of his brother’s entrance, seemed to see, to feel, to know, no presence save that of Alice.

‘Heaven bless and protect thee, my angel, my more than heroic wife,’ he said, as he pressed her again to his heart; but, though his lips quivered, and his eyes grew dim, even as he kissed her brow, though his love and grief were shown too clearly in the fervour of his embrace, and in the passion of his words, no thought of complaint nor of repining so much as crossed his mind. There was a scarcely earthly expression on his face as he raised it to heaven; and the first rays of the morning sun, which streamed through the narrow window, lit up his features with a brighter and yet more hallowed light than the moonbeams that had streamed upon them on that far-off winter midnight.



‘Weep not for me, Alice, my beloved, my own; we shall meet in heaven.’

The door opened, and a small guard of soldiers entered the cell. The Governor was with them.

‘I am ready,’ said Ernest; and no thought of fear troubled the calmness of his voice, not a cloud crossed his face; but he drew the slender form of his wife still closer to his breast, and pressed a yet more fervent kiss upon her brow.

There are few, perhaps, who have not known the anguish of a last embrace; few who at some time of life have not clung with agonised affection to some well-loved form about to be snatched from them for ever. It may have been a sister, who pressed in her close embrace a brother going forth to battle, while the thousand perils, the countless risks, the dreadful agony of suspense, hung heavy on her heart. It may have been a wife, hanging in speechless sorrow, in intensest misery, over the wave-washed silent form of her sailor-husband, as the lone blue sea gave back its spoil, and placed the still uncoffined dead on the shore that he quitted perhaps in health, happiness, and hope. It may have been a mother, who has mourned over the deathbed of the young and lovely, watched the fading bloom of the transparent features, marked the death-dew as it gathered on the marble brow, and bent to catch the whispered accents that fell slowly and tearfully from the lips of the doomed one. Perhaps she has closed the soft dark eyes, and folded the slender hands, and laid the cross—token of her faith as of her grief—between them, and it may be that her heart has well-nigh broken, her grief grown almost beyond enduring, even while her will turned humbly and trustingly towards heaven. But most sad of all, we think, is the lot of those whose dear ones are reft them, not by the direct providence of a far-seeing and compassionate God, but by the cruel deed and stern unpitying judgment of their fellow-men,—who behold a son, a brother, strong in the consciousness of strength, of youth, of manhood, step forth, without aid or succour, to a violent and premeditated doom. And such, reader, was the grief that at this moment surged in passionate agony in the heart

of Alice, as, powerless with emotion, she stood clasped in her husband's arms. Was *this* the ending of their life together! this the *reality* of those dreams which for years had sustained her, even amid the troubles and anxiety of their frequent separations! She had trusted so much, so blindly. She had smiled on her husband's forebodings, and fixed her faith on the sibyl's prophecy, in a manner strange even to herself—strange even to the times in which she lived. But it had failed her now; and hope had darkened well-nigh into despair. Well might Ernest draw her closer and closer to him, as though his touch might shield her from the grief she was enduring. Well might the Governor, nay, even the rude and pitiless soldiers, look on with awe and reverence at the Royalist's last farewell. Well might they gaze with wonder on his unearthly calm, and hang involuntarily upon his quiet tones, and the words that fell half unconsciously from his lips:

‘Fais ce que dois adviene que pourra.’ True to his motto to the last.

They did not understand him, those rude men; but the words thrilled to the heart of the Governor as he heard them. And now why do they delay? Why prolong the sorrow of that parting? Ernest took a cross from the priest, and pressed it to his lips. Addressing himself to the Governor,

‘I will take this with me,’ he said. ‘Afterwards, I trust to your kindness to recover it for my wife.’

Sir John bowed his head in reply, for speak he could not. And Ernest, feeling that his hour was come, placed his now unconscious wife in his brother's arms. He knew not that the eyes of all were filled with tears; that the Governor could not, would not, give the word of parting; but one more passionate embrace to Alice, one farewell word to Charles. Then, as a faint agitated whisper, ‘Ernest, forgive me!’ reached his ear, he seized Sir John's hand in his, he pressed it to his lips, and giving *himself* the fatal word, passed out of the prison, passed on to death.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

'So full of dismal terror was the time.' MILTON.

His face pale as death, his step faltering with emotion, Charles Heyward bore his unconscious sister from the cell, and passed on through the long dark passages until he reached the room in which he had first met the Governor. The stern faces of the guards and gaolers frowned upon him, as he passed, and they marked his blanched features and the white burden in his arms ; but he went on unheeding, until he found himself at length at his destination, and laid Alice in the arms of the sympathising Lady Grandison. Cold, white, rigid was that frail beautiful form, so still, so motionless, that it seemed for the moment as if life itself had departed, and neither of these two watchers could have dared to will it otherwise.

Minutes passed by—they might have been centuries of horror and suspense—and Charles Heyward still stood there, so rapt in thought of his brother as almost to have forgotten her whom that brother had commended to him. Lady Grandison knelt by the sofa, her arm encircling and supporting the delicate form of her niece ; her tears falling fast over those marble features ; her own face stern with fear and grief and indignation. Her heart rebelled against the stern sense of duty which had forced her husband to so sad a task. And yet Sir John had done his best to save his nephew. He had, immediately after his interview with Ernest, despatched a messenger to Cromwell—who was not far distant—to lay the case before him, and obtain a pardon for the brave young Royalist ; and his wife had hoped, with a strange wild yearning hope, that the mission would prove successful. He had stated every circumstance, his own faithful services, the relationship between them, his consequent mournful position, and lastly, the extreme youth of the prisoner himself. He himself had scarcely dared to hope ; and yet the disappointment had been bitter when he read in the face of the messenger that his mission had been of *no avail*. He opened the answering despatch, glanced over the cold formal refusal which it contained, listened to the details of

the interview, heard of the stern unbending mien and the bitter angry words, the iron will and stony heart—on which the pleading of so true and faithful a follower could make no impression—and then he turned away despairing, the last lingering hope quenched within him. But his wife hoped on; and at the voice of her pleading, the proud heart stooped to ask again, and this time it was their eldest son who bore the message. He went; but he had not returned. The hour of his expected arrival had long passed by, and now a new kind of terror was flooding the mother's soul. Had he been slain? He was not less young, less brave, less noble than his cousin. Was he to share his fate? O, why did he not return, be his message of sorrow or of joy? The fatal hour was come, was passing, was past, and Ernest—Night not even *mercy* come too late? And with a shudder Lady Grandison turned away, and pressed to her heart the unfortunate and lonely being towards whom she already yearned with a mother's love.

'My poor, poor Alice! O child, this is hard for thee! May Heaven pity and console thee, for earth cannot comfort a grief like thine!'

Suddenly the deep slow muffled tones of the bell were heard no longer, but in their stead a loud shout, as of many voices, broke sharp and distinct upon the stillness of the morning. Was it triumph? Was it rejoicing? Was it to tell that the dark deed had been consummated, the work of sorrow accomplished—that the young, the brave, the loyal, had passed from earth? Charles felt it was so; and his heart swelled well-nigh to breaking, and his face grew paler and paler, sterner and still sterner in its sorrow.

Alice opened her eyes, and gazed anxiously around her; then as her ear caught the sound, and Charles's face all too plainly interpreted its meaning, she uttered a low agonised cry of horror, and, sinking on her knees, the fountains of her sorrow gave way and she wept. The much-tried heart found a solace in its tears, but the face that was raised to heaven wore a look of agony that, for many a long day yet, would haunt the memory of the two that beheld it.

The shouts had ceased, but the silence that followed was more dreadful than they had been. Alice had bowed her head, and her hands were clasped together. She was thinking of her husband; not as she had seen him last; ah, no, her heart would have broken with horror and with agony. She thought of that winter's night when they had knelt together in Fairleigh Hermitage; when the sanctuary lamp had consoled her with its radiance, and the sweet face of the Virgin Mother had gazed down upon her from its altar-shrine; and Alice clasped her hands yet more tightly together, and cried aloud in her sorrow—a prayer oft repeated in those last few hours, but never with so ardent intensity as now:

‘Mary, Mother of God, help me and save my husband!’

A cry, almost a shriek, broke in reply from Lady Grandison, and Alice turned involuntarily at the sound. What was it that she then beheld, that held her for a moment as one turned to stone, and then flooded her soul with an unutterable joy? Was it an echo to her prayer, or was it a delusive dream, that Ernest himself now crossed the threshold, and held her to his heart, and showered his kisses on her brow? It was himself, and free!

We will not attempt to describe the emotions of that hour—emotions too sacred to be lightly touched upon, emotions too deep for words to express or pen portray. We will not intrude upon their joy and gladness. Rather, leaving the two so cruelly parted, so strangely reunited alone together, let us follow Lady Grandison, and learn the cause of so happy an event.

It was with no little difficulty that James Grandison had obtained an interview with Cromwell. That General had been already displeased at the messages sent him earlier in the day; and on the young soldier's entrance he turned to him with a mixture of anger and annoyance. But James heeded not his displeasure; the evident affliction of his father, the tears and entreaties of Esther, and his own yearning sympathy for his brave young kinsman had urged him on his way and still braced him with resolution. His heart, however, almost failed him at the General's first words, for they told him but too plainly the deep-rooted vindictiveness that caused them.

'I have already received one message from your father, young man. I should have hoped he had something else to do with his time than to spend it in vain intercession for a rebel and traitor.'

'Would you forbid an uncle to plead for his nephew's life, a brother for a brother's?' asked James, in a tone of deep but suppressed emotion.

'Yes,' returned the General sternly; 'I would have them tear aside the nearest ties of relationship rather than own a kinsman among the ungodly.'

'And if they *cannot* do so?'

'Then by other hands must their bonds be rent asunder. Plead not for Colonel Heyward, young man; his life is already forfeited, and he must *die*.'

'Say not so, say not so, your Excellency!' cried James. 'He is so young, so brave, for such a fate.'

'He is not too young to have striven against us,' said the General bitterly; 'and others younger than he have fallen upon the scaffold. You had best find surer excuses, young man.'

'Alas, what shall I say?' said James sadly. 'I have appealed to you as the arbiter of his fate, and you have refused me. I appeal to you, then, as a father, and I entreat you to think, were your own son a captive and condemned, what would be your feelings.'

'Such as I do not feel inclined to express to you, James Grandison,' replied Cromwell sternly. 'His doom is already fixed, and the warrant is in your father's hands.'

'Bid him not, I implore you, be his kinsman's executioner!' cried James.

'Sir John was not appointed to his present post to consult his own feelings, I presume,' replied Cromwell. 'Return to him, young man, and desire him from me to do his duty.'

James Grandison glanced at the timepiece. It was already *past* the hour when he should have started, and the awful moment was now looming in the distance. He thought of his father's anguish, the mute horror of his mother, the agony of

the poor young wife, the parting words, the prison-grave ; and gathering together all his courage and his firmness, he turned once more to the General. Cromwell coldly waved his hand. He had marked the hasty glance upon the timepiece, and had guessed the thoughts that fled rapidly through the young soldier's mind, and with a bitterly scornful smile upon his face he again addressed him :

'The evening wears. It is not our wont to be so long delayed by questions of so little moment. Retire, and at your peril breathe another word in behalf of the man who insulted and upbraided me. Begone ; or, if thou wilt, tarry in the outer chamber, for thy steed maybe is tired, and thou mayst not care to *witness* thy kinsman's fate.'

Faint and giddy with horror and indignation, James raised his eyes to heaven, as though appealing against the heartless cruelty of those bitter and revengeful words ; and then he flung himself on his knees at the feet of the General and again broke forth :

'O, for mercy's sake, spare him, General Cromwell ! By the mercy thou wouldest thyself desire, I implore thee to hear me. By the love of friends and children ; by the long and faithful service that my father has rendered thee ; by the friendship with which thou hast ever honoured the brother of the captive ; by the true and zealous—'

He stopped. A light step was heard in the corridor, the rustle of drapery outside, and a woman's voice demanded admission. James, as he rose, saw Cromwell start and change colour, a frown gathering on his face as he looked towards the door, where a lady clad in mourning, with a face at once sweet, melancholy, and interesting, stepped forward and threw herself at the General's feet. He raised her with more gentleness than could have been expected from his rugged nature, and leading her to a seat, stood silent and motionless before her, the frown passing from his face.

'Why, how now, Elizabeth ! This is an unexpected favour. Whence come you, and in such haste, child ? Nay, but thou hast travelled over-swiftly. 'Twas not prudent in thee,' as he

marked the varying colour in her cheek and the unnatural brightness of her eyes.

Elizabeth Claypole—for it was Cromwell's favourite daughter who thus came unexpectedly before him—rose from her seat and again knelt before her father.

'I come to beg a life,' she said. 'There has been woe enough, and grief enough, and blood enough; and it is time to sue for mercy, lest a curse should fall upon our heads for the evil and the misery of the land. Father, spare him whom you have condemned.'

'You also?' cried Cromwell, amazed no less than angry at this unforeseen interest in one whom he had learnt to hate. 'What excuse canst *thou* prefer to plead the cause of a rebel and Malignant? Or has thy husband perhaps discovered some relationship with the prisoner, like our friend Sir John Grandison? Mind your needle, daughter, as a woman should, and leave the fate of prisoners to men.'

'Nay,' returned his daughter, tears of mingled emotion and hurt feeling dimming her beautiful eyes, 'I will not rise from my father's feet until he grant this little boon to me. I claim him not as kinsman—though one so brave might be a cause of pride to any one—but I ask for one who is a friend of mine, and whose daughter owes him life itself.'

'Colonel Heyward dies to-morrow,' returned Cromwell, 'be he twenty times the nephew of Sir John, or the creditor of Mrs. Claypole's friend. Retire, daughter; this is no place for women, neither is this discussion a fitting one for thee.'

He raised her as he spoke, and she stood for a moment silent. James advanced eagerly towards her.

'Madam,' he said, 'if you abandon him he is lost.'

Elizabeth again turned entreatingly to her father:

'Has General Cromwell forgotten his daughter's love in his fame and power?' she said earnestly. 'Does he prefer a brief revenge, a passing triumph, to her lasting gratitude? Can the blood of one ill-fated Royalist be so necessary to the State that the happiness of so many hearts be cast aside to purchase it? Is it not enough that the anger of Heaven has visited me



or thy deeds and is bowing me to the grave, a fitting victim to be maledictions showered upon us? Does not the blood of a sovereign and a kinsman\* cry loud enough for vengeance, or must one more crime be perpetrated, one more stain be cast upon our lineage, one more victim rise to haunt my slumbers and to chase away for ever the peace and happiness of my life? Father, for my sake, grant me what I have asked of you!

The tears were streaming down her cheeks, her hands were lapsed, her voice faltered, and she could say no more.

Cromwell turned away his face, as though unable to behold unmoved the agitated features of that well-beloved daughter, ever whom, even as she had said, the shadows of a lingering death were already cast. Then he took his pen and wrote a commutation of the sentence.

‘Have your will, daughter,’ he said slowly, but without once raising his eyes to her face. ‘Take it; the sentence is commuted to exile. But remember, it is the first time and the last that Oliver Cromwell forgets the State for the tears and lamentations of a woman.’

Elizabeth snatched the paper from the table with a low cry of thankfulness, and pressed her father’s hand to her lips; then turned hurriedly to James.

‘Haste thee on thy way, good youth,’ she said; ‘and loiter not, for much I fear me it already waxes late.’

With many broken words of gratitude and emotion, James Grandison received the precious document; and with a low obeisance departed, leaving the father and daughter alone together.

We need not describe his journey. The reader will rightly guess that it was a fleet as it was an anxious one; and it had need to be so.

The fatal word was well-nigh spoken. Already it trembled on the lips of the Governor, who, after one long sad glance upon his nephew, turned away his face, and waited till the last bless-

\* *Cromwell was distantly related to Charles I. on his mother’s side.*

ing had been pronounced by the priest to end a scene at once so moving and so awful.

Suddenly the approaching clatter of hoofs upon the stones broke thankfully upon them ; a strange hopeful murmur arose in the multitude ; the crowd divided ; the gates were opened wide ; the guards gave way ; a stir—a pause—and, breathless, tired, wayworn, James Grandison stood upon the scaffold, and flinging himself at his father's feet, placed the long-hoped-for parchment in his hands.

Sir John tore it open and glanced down the page. A gleam of joy beamed upon his face—a joy not unmixed with incredulity. He stood as in a trance, so new and so profound were his sensations ; then, starting suddenly, he folded his son to his heart in the intensity of his emotion, and signed to him to communicate to the amazed crowd the tidings *his* feelings prevented him from uttering.

James stepped forward, and as, with an honest gladness beaming on his boyish brow and a low deep thrillingness in his tone, he related to them his mission of mercy, the words, 'A pardon, a pardon!' rose upon the morning breeze, rising from many hearts and from many lips, passing from one to another of that great multitude, winning upon the softer feelings of their hearts, echoed back from the enclosing walls, repeated again and again, growing and trembling and fading in one mighty cry of triumph, of thankfulness, and of joy. Strange that such should be their feelings, that such should be the cry of those assembled to witness his death ; but so it was. And another cry had risen to heaven from the dark vaulted chamber of the fortress—a cry low and agonised in its intensity ; a cry from an almost broken heart ; a cry of which this seemed truly to be the echo : 'Mother of God, help me, and save my husband !' And he was saved ; the prayer of his wife had risen before the throne of God, and was answered in heaven.

And meanwhile Ernest stood silent, scarcely conscious in his great surprise of what passed around him, knowing but that *he was spared to Alice, rejoicing but for her sake, receiving back the life so nearly forfeited for his King that he might spend*

it to the end as he had spent it from the beginning. He stood as he had stood before, his hands clasped, his eyes glancing up towards heaven. The glory of another world had beamed upon him, and for a while it had faded. The dark presentiments of other years had fled and for ever; but they left instead a chastened preparedness for another life, which would be his to the end. He had met death face to face, and his strong heart had not quailed before it. But the vision had again faded; the future shone brightly, if earthfully, before him, and a long and happy life was his portion and his destiny.

And so, little by little, the glad cries, the gladder greetings reached his soul, and he turned to meet them, a look of deep heartfelt thankfulness upon his face. He marked the quiet intensity of feeling depicted on Master Clifford's venerable brow, the speechless gratitude of his warm-hearted uncle, the boyish gladness of James Grandison; and far off in the crowd, stern, harsh, and unbending even in that hour, zeal and hatred and fanaticism curiously combined, stood one who had seemed as the evil genius of his life, whose hand had well-nigh brought him to the scaffold—the Roundhead Obadiah. And near him, with many a varied expression on his withered features, stood a man whom he recognised as the preceptor of his youth, towards whom his heart still yearned in pity and in regard, who, though stern and harsh and vindictive, had still a kind feeling for his patron and his family—the pious psalm-loving George Gottenberg.

Sir John Grandison, however, allowed but little time for reflection. Hastening to his nephew, he pressed him fervently to his heart; then, as the crowd began slowly to disperse, as the bell tolled forth the hour of six—ringing, as it were, the Angelus in the Catholic hearts of Ernest and the priest—they forced their way through the band of soldiers who surrounded them, and entered the gloomy portals of that fortress which they had quitted so lately under the darkest and most melancholy auspices.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

‘The web of our life is of a mingled yarn,  
Good and ill together.’ SHAKESPEARE.

DEAR reader, but one more chapter and our task is done; and this history of joys and sorrows, of clouds and sunshine, will be brought to a close.

It was the 2d of July 1660, nearly nine years after the events recorded in the last chapter. The summer breeze played lightly through the foliage and shook down the golden blossoms of the laburnum. A shower of rain had cooled the atmosphere and revived the drooping but beautiful children of Nature; on every leaf and flower hung a trembling drop of silver, sparkling and fading in the heat of the sun. Soft and sweet came the song of birds from the adjacent woods, peals of merry laughter fell gladly on the air; white scarfs and pennons wafted gaily alike from the gray old turrets of the manor-house and the neighbouring village of Fairleigh. Groups of richly-attired Cavaliers and noble dames were scattered here and there on the smooth green lawn; and merry children ran to and fro from one group to the other, chasing the birds and butterflies, themselves as gay and thoughtless, themselves as bright, as gleesome, and as beautiful as the objects of their pursuit.

In the centre of a small knot of officers stood Ernest Heyward, the same yet strangely altered from the boy who had leant there some fifteen years before and listened to the prophecy that had now long been fulfilled.

His frame was almost as slight as then, and his face had yet the same faultless features, the same waves of auburn hair, only the expression was different. The bright, hopeful, restless, boyish look was gone, and the pensive sweetness in its stead told the observer that if he had suffered much, much happiness also had been his lot. If a weary exile and the constant toil of war had been his portion, he was resting now, still in the zenith of his youth, in the bosom of those by whom he was loved so devotedly. Truly the sibyl had spoken well; the light

had broken through the cloud, but how bright a light had not been given her to see! Wealth, fame, and honour, all now were his, doubly his, for they were the reward of virtue and had been purchased by suffering. On his release from prison, Ernest had followed his Sovereign into exile, sharing his fortunes and his sorrows. He had been true to him to the end, and had shared in his triumph at last. With him had fought, and with him also conquered, his friend and kinsman, Edward Leighton. Though different in age and character, they had been devoted comrades for the last fifteen years, and the same friendship would continue through life.

James and Esther were married some five years before, and were now guests at Edgeleigh, as also a younger brother of the former, Richard by name. Sir John and Lady Grandison had also given hopes of being able to attend. General Norreys was absent in London on important but private business; he could not therefore join them.

Major Heyward, too puritanical to acknowledge readily the sway of pleasure and of luxury which the accession of the second Charles seemed to promise, too true to the maxims of his youth easily to discard them, bade farewell to his home, and, taking on himself a voluntary exile, passed into Germany, and there followed the fortunes of his Puritan friends, having first made over his property in England to Ernest and his heirs. Perhaps the fact that Ruth had for some years back adopted not only the cause but the faith also of her youngest and favourite brother, and was about to plight her troth to a Royalist and a Catholic, had hardened him to the entreaties by which both Ernest and herself would have detained him among them. Any way expostulations were useless, and Ernest was obliged at length reluctantly to acquiesce in his decision. Charles was followed into exile by George Gottenberg, who, on the death of his wife, had attached himself again to the service of his former patron, and, like him, refused submission to the Stuart King. Meanwhile, a few days before our story reopens, Ernest and Alice had settled down finally in the well-loved home of *their adventurous youth.*

And now it was the eve of Ernest's birthday, a day that must henceforth be a double festivity to him and to his wife. Yet a shade of sadness lingered on his face as he glanced towards the stately form of the widowed Countess of Derby, who, with many another illustrious guest, was spending a few days with them, and who now sat beside Alice, her face shaded from the sun by the pendent branches of an acacia.

Alice was still very beautiful; and if her nine-and-twenty summers had stolen away the bright flush of her early girlhood, they had lent to her features a rarer if a graver charm; the smile that beamed often on her lips was sweeter and holier in its expression, and the clear accents of her voice wore a shade of pensiveness which showed that, though now all was joy, clouds truly indeed had shadowed her spring-time.

Her companion, Charlotte de la Tremouille, was a friend of some years' standing. They had met when Lady Derby was still weeping over her husband's fate, when Alice was rejoicing over the wonderful escape of hers. Something in the graceful beauty, the earnest loyalty, the quiet heroism of the fair young wife had touched the heart of one who was herself a heroine; and the grief that had so nearly shadowed over her seemed a strange and touching thing to one who had drunk her cup of suffering to the full. Much time had since been spent together; many of the stirring events of the last few years had been foreseen, watched for, and shared in by them both, and now Charlotte de la Tremouille was the guest of Alice, and sat with her in her husband's beautiful home, and joyed in her joys even while she forgot not her own mendless sorrow. Her robes of mourning rendered her pale features even more striking than would otherwise have been, and the tresses that rested heavily on her brow were streaked with untimely silver; but the fire of enthusiasm was unquenched; and her eyes glistened with emotion, the faint colour deepened on her cheek, as she looked upon him who had so bravely, so devotedly, saved the *King* for whom her husband had cast away his life.

They were recalling in low eager tones the events of the *last few years*. It was their favourite subject, and was to-day

naturally so, for the Countess had been but now introduced to the scene of escape. It was then that many things untouched upon before had been explained, and Alice flushed with pride or paled with emotion as she strayed once again through the chequered mazes of the past.

'And what said King Charles, dear Alice, when his gallant deliverer was restored to him?' said the Countess, as her hostess paused in her narrative. 'How did he receive him?'

'He received him nobly; rather with the greeting of a friend than of a sovereign, thanking him for his devotion and rejoicing warmly in his safety. I cannot tell you what he *said*, Lady Derby; I only know what I felt in hearing him.'

'And when and how did the King become aware of his capture? You have told me much, dear Alice, but never that, I think.'

'He *heard* it first from the servant whom Ruth sent to be his guide, an old retainer of my father's whom we employed about the grounds. But he had already guessed the truth. The clash of the swords had reached him where he stood, and, as he has since told my husband, he bitterly regretted the promise he had given. Once he was even fain to return, but the door was bolted and barred against him, and a moment later the sudden silence told too truly that his defender had surrendered or was slain. It was a relief to find from his guide that the first had happened, and that the worst and darkest sorrow had not as yet fallen upon the house that had sheltered him. He knew no further, until at the court of France, Ernest again proffered himself to serve under his banner.'

'*How* he must have welcomed him!' cried the Countess. 'And yet how little could words repay what he had done!'

'Well, he knighted him for his pains, which is always *something*,' said Colonel Seymour, advancing from behind, and saluting both the ladies. 'But I don't see that he could have done *less*, Lady Heyward.'

'Colonel Seymour!' said Alice warmly. 'We did not expect *you so early*; but you are most welcome.'

'Truly I knew it, fair lady. Sir Ernest has always a welcome for an old friend like myself, so I ventured to rely on your forbearance, though my good but ceremonious friend, Hertford, would fain have restrained me.'

'Lord Hertford is with you?' said Lady Heyward.

'No, I am glad to say he is not,' replied Seymour mischievously, 'or I should scarcely have ventured to disturb you in your converse. Yet I pray you, do not stop talking on my account; there is nothing I like better than to live over old times again, and to recall all the friends who have gone from us.' And with that he fell into a reverie.

The Countess sighed deeply, and Lady Heyward was also silent. Presently Seymour resumed:

'And so poor Major Heyward has exiled himself rather than bend his knee to the King.'

'He has indeed,' replied Alice. 'But I trust that time will convert him and restore him to us.'

'Nay, I should not much regret him, if I were you,' said Colonel Seymour half jokingly, as he cast his eye carelessly round the garden, more fixedly, more meaningly at the manor-house with its beautiful woods and lawns. 'His room would, in the present case, be more desirable than his presence, and I would have rejoiced rather than grieved at his insanity.'

Alice coloured but looked up with some spirited reply, when she was spared the trouble, as a gentleman of military appearance and martial bearing, approached and greeted the ladies.

'If those are truly and really your sentiments, Seymour,' he said, in tones half rallying, half severe, 'I should scarcely advise you to give frequent expression to them. They do not do you honour.'

'Is that *you*, Hertford?' cried Seymour, in amazement. 'Why, I had fancied you twenty miles off! I have been making your apologies to these ladies.'

Hertford smiled. 'Lady Heyward knows you of old, Seymour,' he said; and then, after a few minutes more of conversa-



tion, the gentlemen moved off together in the direction of the house.

The Countess looked up as they disappeared, and turning to Alice, seemed about to resume the conversation where they had left it off, but their colloquies were doomed to interruption ; for a fair child of some seven summers leapt, at that instant, from among the bushes, and threw himself into the arms of Lady Heyward.

‘What is it, Charlie? What is it, my precious boy?’ said she tenderly.

‘Uncle Edward is come,’ said the boy, ‘and my father wants oo too.’

‘I am coming, my own,’ said Lady Heyward. ‘You will excuse me, Lady Derby,’ she added, turning with a smile to the Countess.

‘Lady tum too,’ said the boy, looking shyly from among his clustering curls at the stately figure of the Countess, and then hiding his face in his mother’s lap.

‘Well, Charlie, run on and tell your father we are coming,’ said Alice ; and the bright boy, with a merry laugh, ran off to do her bidding.

‘He is very like you, dear Alice,’ said the Countess, as they walked slowly in the direction of the house. ‘And your little daughter is the very image of Sir Ernest. Where is she?’

‘With her father, I fancy, though Charlie is his special pet, you know. Ah, there is our gentle bridegroom, and a whole crowd of military friends, amongst whom surely I recognise Sir John Grandison,’ she added, as, stepping from the shadow of the trees, she caught a glimpse of the gay party on the lawn, by whom they were in another moment surrounded.

‘My dear Edward, a thousand welcomes!’ cried Lady Heyward, as her brother pressed forward and warmly embraced her. ‘And every fondest wish and blessing that can give joy to the eve of your wedding-day.’

‘Thanks, dear sister,’ said Edward. ‘Thanks also for the *kind care which has assembled round you on this joyful occasion*

the esteemed and noble friends of my soldier life, the sharers of my dangers, and the more than sharers in our successes,' he added, with a smile.

'Major Leighton is *modest*,' said Hertford, coming up at the moment, and overhearing the last words. 'His sister, however, is not likely to forget his long and faithful services in the cause so dear to her heart; and his enthusiasm, gallantry—'

'Of course, Hertford, we all know *that*,' said Seymour, laughing. 'There's no need of long speeches; they're *understood*.'

'Lady Heyward! is it possible?' said a voice behind them. And Sir John Grandison advanced from the group, and stood before her. 'You are so changed from the little pale Alice of former days that I can scarcely believe—'

'It is *Alice*, however,' said Lady Heyward, lifting her bright face towards him; 'and this is my brother, Edward Leighton, the hero of the day, the bridegroom of our gentle Ruth.'

The two gentlemen shook hands warmly, and Sir John continued:

'Your husband is in quest of you, my dear niece, and your little daughter is having a game of romps with her cousin Richard. It is hard to say which of them enjoys it most.'

'Ernestine, probably,' said Lady Heyward, smiling, and accepting his proffered arm. 'It is not often that a young man of five-and-twenty will devote himself with a good will to the amusement of a young lady of seven, and I fear my little daughter is as wild in her day as her mother was before her.'

'That is not saying much, my dear niece; and Richard is far too enthusiastic an admirer of the mother to grudge a few moments for the pleasure of the daughter. O, there is Ernest, and some one else too!' he added, as Alice, with an exclamation of pleasure, stepped hastily forward to where Sir Ernest was standing side by side with Master Clifford. It was their first meeting after more than nine years, for the kind old priest *had been absent from Fairleigh at the time of their return.*

'I sent for you, sweet wife,' said Ernest tenderly, as he

advanced to meet her, 'in order that you might greet this dear and honoured friend with more ease and less formality than would have been the case had he come suddenly upon you in the crowd below ; there are emotions, dear Elsie, so deep, so sacred, recalled by the sight of "Master Clifford" that one would not wish the eyes of all to be upon us in the first interview.'

Alice did not speak, but the glance she cast upon him was sufficient assent, and a scene of fervent, almost tearful, welcome, of deep heart-felt rejoicing, followed. Then Lady Grandison approached in her turn, and warmly embraced her niece ; and little Ernestine, her arms full of flowers, her golden hair falling thickly over her shoulders, her large blue eyes brimming with life and gladness, rushed up the steps and flung herself into her mother's arms ; while Richard Grandison stayed his hot pursuit to exchange a cordial greeting with his cousin and Master Clifford.

Swiftly the afternoon wore on, and they adjourned to the house, where gay music and merry laughter, and the sweet converse of esteem and affection filled up the evening, which was to be followed by so bright a day—the wedding-day of Ruth and Edward.

The morning sun rose clear and cloudless in the heavens, the birds sang gaily, the very flowers seemed brighter and more fragrant than of wont, when, at an early hour, a bridal party once more assembled in the humble little oratory in Master Clifford's house. Again the decorations had been chiefly the work of Alice ; for though the old rule was over the land, and the Stuarts were once more on the throne, and every heart was rejoicing in a dream of peace and prosperity, the time was not yet at hand when Catholics could openly profess their faith, and when the churches that had been destroyed or confiscated could be restored. Even Ernest and Edward, who had fought so bravely for their King, could not claim exemption from the trials and perils that still oppressed those of their religion ; and though a brilliant group of guests were assembled to share in

the interior. It was only a very slender portion that actually remained of the marriage. The altar was the same as when that union made that fatal home, but the ivy and the snowdrops were exchanged for a luxuriance of summer flowers, and long golden blossoms of honeysuckle, purple clematis and pale acacia, graceful ferns and great white lilies, formed a canopy and something that art would vainly strive to emulate. Ernest and Alice had bowed low before the altar; and now, casting from them alike the present and the future, knelt in their old accustomed places, and raised the prayer of thanksgiving to heaven. Then Alice moved more near, and gazed joyfully, and still anxiously, upon the scene before her. The wintry brightness of the moonbeams gleamed no longer, the brightest rays of the summer sun were streaming through the casement; but the memory of other years was strong and vivid in her heart. She thought of the night that she had knelt a bride, in the joy of her joyous betrothal: and again, of that hour, when, far away, with a sinking spirit and a breaking heart, the memory of that scene bore a breath of comfort to her soul, and her agonised prayer rose upward and was answered: 'Mary, Mother of God, help me, and save my husband.' Ever till her dying day would Alice think of that awful hour in love and gratitude; but now her dearest wishes were fulfilled, and her beloved brother was about to join his lot with one scarcely less dear to her than he was. And very fair Ruth seemed as she knelt before the altar, her bright brown hair released from its confinement, and the simple string of pearls resting upon her brow. The pretty simplicity of her Royalist attire enhanced her placid beauty; and if this bridal pair were less handsome, less youthful, less romantic than the last, they came at least with happier auspices and brighter prospects, with loving hearts around them, with good wishes and rejoicings on every side, and the heartfelt approval of their best and dearest—of Ernest and of Alice. Good Master Clifford! something like a tear glistened on his silver lashes as they stood before him, but it was a tear of joy.

*The bridal procession left the cottage and hastened to rejoin*

the rest of the guests, who were awaiting their arrival on the terrace. Alice, after one fervent ejaculation of 'My dear, dear Edward!' extended her hands to Ruth; and the bride, tearful but happy, flung herself into the arms of her young sister; and as the warm kisses were imprinted on her brow, as the slender hands of Alice lovingly entwined her own, the noble guests there present pressed forward to offer their congratulations to the bridal pair, mingling them as though by a common impulse with warm wishes for the future happiness of Sir Ernest and Lady Heyward.

'You are doubly my brother to-day, Edward,' said Ernest, when a moment was at last allowed him. 'Would that my poor mother had been here to bless you on your wedding-day! You have a fair bride in Ruth,' he continued, smiling, 'and methinks it is under happier auspices that you have chosen her than the cold wintry night that gave to me my Alice. We have dree'd our weird together, however, and will now bid adieu to all memories of our sorrows, lest they dim the bright smile that should alone grace the feast. See, Alice,' he said, as she turned to him with a smile, 'our exile has passed, and the very sun seems brighter to our gaze for the storm that came before.'

'Yes, the prophecy is fulfilled,' said Alice. 'Sunshine after storm. The light has broken through the cloud.'

'Yea, the prophecy *is* fulfilled!' echoed a strange voice; and as they turned in surprise the guests gave way, and the Scottish seer stood before them. 'Yea, the prophecy is fulfilled!' and the light flickered and faded in her black piercing eyes, like the rays of a dying-out lamp; and they turned proudly and scornfully upon the frightened guests; kindly upon Alice, fondly, reverently upon Sir Ernest Heyward. 'The storms hae broken abune ye,' she cried. 'I tauld ye it would be sae; and noo that it hae come to pass, I may e'en gae to my grave in peace. I tauld ye to fear, and ye hae feared; I tauld ye to hope, and ye hae hoped; and noo my life's amaisht gane, and the light o' mine een *is* fled, an auld woman's blessing be upon thee and thine,

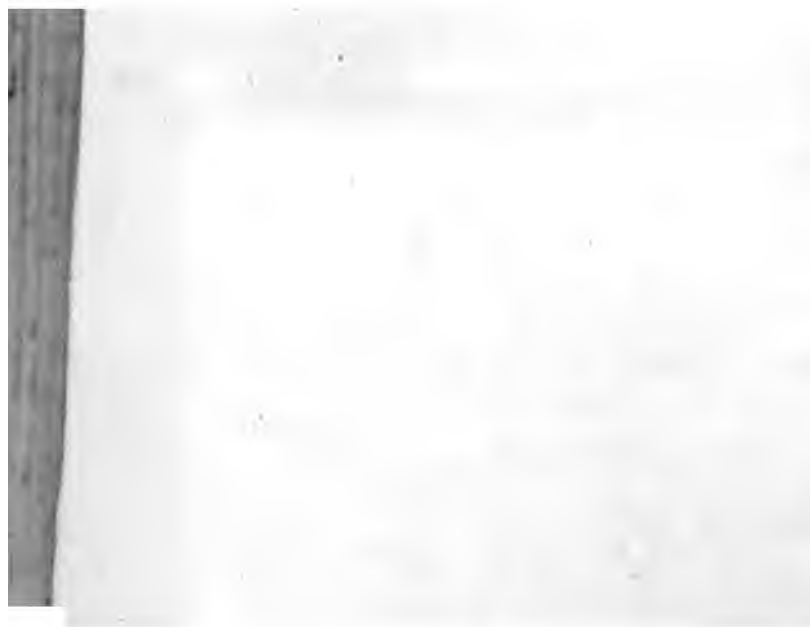
and every gude be yours that earth or heaven can gi'e. Nay, grasp na my hand, Sir Ernest. I hae done ye nae gude. I hae loved ye for the sake o' your mither, and your wife for your sake. I hae loved ye as the bairns that are gane frae me ; and noo my time's come, and I too maun gae. For hard thy weird, and thou hast dree'd it ; hard the struggle, and thou hast won it ; bitter the storm, but it is over, and the light has broken through the cloud.'

THE END.

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